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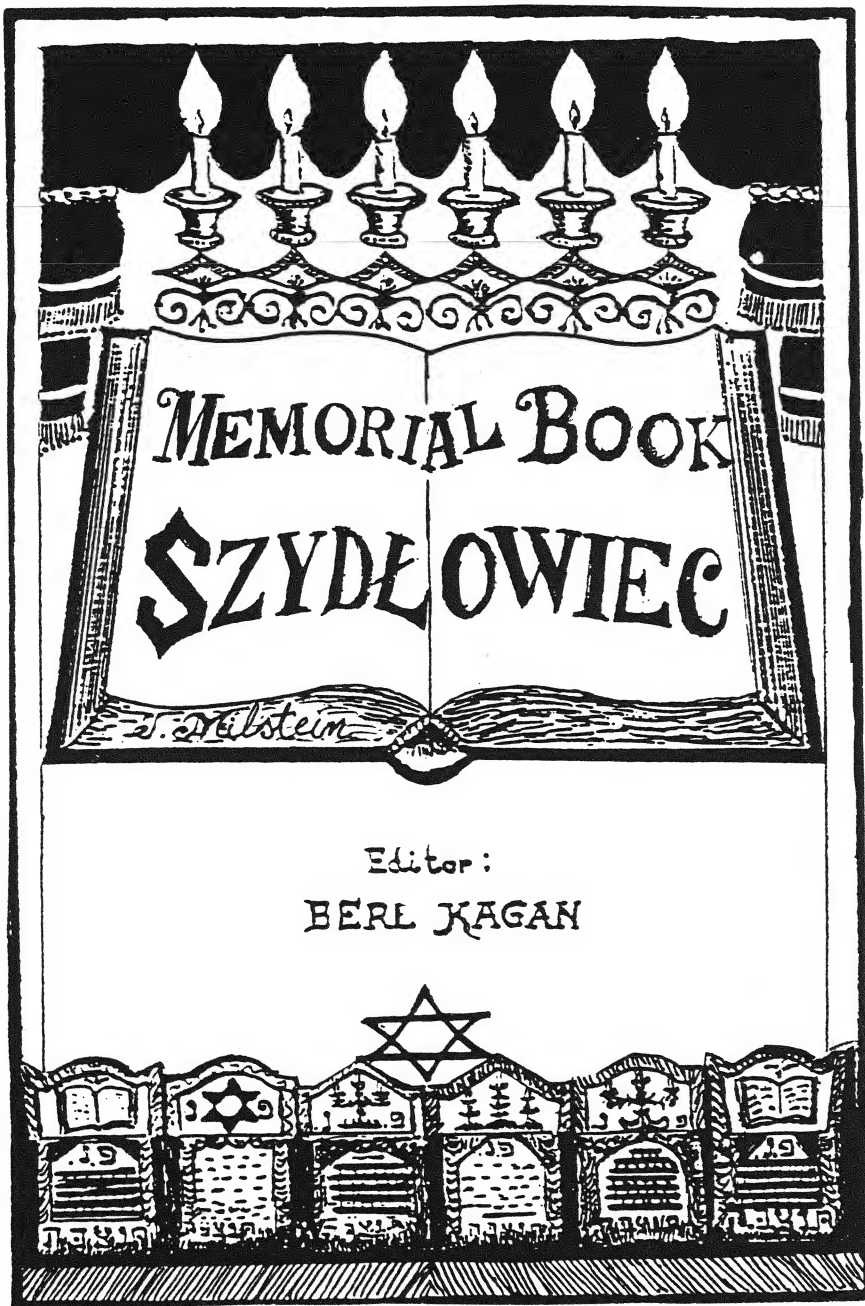
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SZYDLOWIEC

Memorial Book

Translated from Yiddish
MAX ROSENFELD

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The Committee of the Shidlowsky English Yizkor Book



The Committee of the Shidlovtser Yiskor-Book in Yiddish

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Page

1. Brief history of the Book 11
2. Akiba Berlinski 13
3. Yitzhok Goldkorn 15

FROM THE BEGINNING TO 1918

1. E. Lifschutz — The Jews of Szydlowiec 21
2. Berl Kagan — Rabbis and Rebbeim 32
3. Motl Eisenberg — In peaceful times 36
4. Moshe Schwartzfuter — Of times gone by 44
5. Shmuel Chustetski — A bit of history 48
6. M. Bernstein — The cemetery 49

BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

1. Jacob Pomerantz — A city of labor 55
2. Simcha Blander — Religious life 56
3. Abraham Finkler — Jews in City Council 59
4. Isaac Milstein — Melamdim Hedorim 60
5. Devorah Blander — Customs 62
6. Hershl Kriss — Blood Libel 63
7. Sarah Zeller — “Mendl Trotsky” 64
8. Isaac Milstein — Theater and Artists 66
9. Reyzl Kwiatowski — Doctors 69
10. Elka Silberman — Dentists 71
11. Pearl Teichman — Our Youth 72
12. Frieda Kuplik — The Mill 72
13. Yankl Silberman — A matter of spirits 73
14. Leybush Glas — Death of two boys 74
15. Majorek Rosenberg — Tragic memories 75

INSTITUTIONS AND PARTIES

1. Saul, Hinda Zlotov — The Zionist Movement 79
2. Yankl Silberman — The “Bund” 80
3. Yosel Silberstein — Betar 83
4. J. Silberman — Poale Zion 84
5. Malke Silberman — Mizrachi 84
6. Abraham Finkler — Bikur Holim 85
7. B. Kagan — Before the Holocaust (A Summary) . 86

HOLOCAUST

1. Isaac Milstein — Chronicle of the Destruction 93
2. Abraham Finkler — A Ghetto without
barbed wire 137
3. Motl Eisenberg — Running from death 161
4. Ben-Tsion Rosenberg — Escape from the Abyss 186
5. Israel Friedman — Under the Nazi boot 199
6. Moshe Kunovski — Saved by a Well 202
7. Isaac Moro — My brothers fate 203
8. Chaya Kornbroyt — Our hiding-place 205
9. Joseph Friedenson — Hassidic Underground 207
10. Isaiah Henig — Episdoes in our torment 216
11. Berl Krajevski — Out of the trap 220
12. Leah Eisenberg — A Radom “Aktsie” 221
13. Elka Schreiberger — Kitchen for refugees 223
14. Neche Katz — Our neighbors 223
15. Jeremiah Meyerfeld — Catholic “Love” 224
16. Wolfe Eisenberg — A Jewish policeman 224
17. Moshe Cooperberg — A boy in Ghetto 225
18. Toba Sharfhartz — From home to Auschwitz 226
19. Mindia Citrinbaum — Caught in trap 228
20. Leybl Monk — From hiding to camp 228
21. Yankl Silberman — My last look at our shtetl ... 230
22. Isaac Moro — On the “Aryan” side 231

23. Abba Rosenbaum — With an “Aryan pass”	235
24. Nathan Stark — With forged papers	238
25. Mordechai Strigler — The Skarzysko camp	241
26. Isaac Milstein — In camps with Szydlowiecers ..	278
27. Abraham Weisbrot — Ghetto, Hiding-place and camp	282
28. Elka Silverman — How we saved ourselves	287
29. Menachem Rosenzweig — In Hasag	292
30. Fishl Kornbroyt — Just luck	293
31. Hannah Bavnik — First days in Hasag	294
32. Eliezer Levin — A Seder in camp	295
33. Choneh Piasek — In Ghetto	296
34. Miriam Silberman — One of many	297
35. Feyge Shwartzfing — In the camp	297
36. Osher Kornbroyt — From Juzefow to Hasag	298
37. Feitshe Eisenberg — From camp to camp	300
38. Hannah Freilich — I cannot forget	301
39. Bronek Tsingisser — Among good Christians	303
40. Motl Eisenberg — Camp Wolonow	305
41. Jacob Pomerantz — Kingdom of death	309
42. Jacob Shapshewich — Starchowicz	310
43. Jacob Binshtok — Danger after danger	313
44. Rachel Lederman — Three sisters in the camps .	313
45. Leybl Silberman — In the camp	315
46. Abraham Tseigfinger — Leap from a death train	318
47. Mordechai Richter — Escape	320
48. Shmuel Chwstecki — Across the border	321
49. Shlomo Rosenzweig — Wherever our eyes took us	322
50. Yosl Silverstein — Death in Toulouse	323
51. M. Dreynodl — In France	324
52. Joshua Krantz — In Belgium	324
53. Max Ostro — The last deportation	325

54. Isaiah Henig — First labor camps	329
55. Dora Blander — From Shidlovtse to Dachau	333
56. Isaac Milstein — Shidlovtse in 1980	335
57. Michael Pomeranz — A journey without end	337
58. B. Kagan — Life during the Holocaust (A Summary)	345
59. Szydlowiec in Picture	
60. Yizkor	

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SZYDLOWIEC (SHIDLOVTSE) YIZKOR BOOK

The idea of publishing a Szydlowiec Yizkor Book was born early in 1956 during a gathering of landsleit in Paris. At a memorial meeting in New York for our martyrs it was again broached. But the idea remained suspended in mid-air because at first it found few supporters among the Szydlowiec landsleit in New York.

The plan to immortalize our home town in a memorial book was given concrete form in 1960 when the Association of Immigrants from Szydlowiec in Israel took some practical steps to implement it. The New York landsmanshaft was happy to hear this news and decided to help our townsmen in Israel with funds, as well as with the gathering of materials. Other Szydlowiec landsleit also helped financially.

Regrettably, the initiative of the Association in Israel was unable to sustain itself for very long. This resulted, however, in a second initiative, in mid-1966, to publish a Szydlowiec Yizkor Book, this time by a group of landsleit in Argentina and Brazil. But nothing further happened until 1967, when the landsmanshaft in New York began taking the project more seriously.

On the New York Book Committee at that time were: Isaac Moro, President; Fishl Korenbraut, Vice-President; Yankel Silberman and Isaac Milstein, Secretaries; Abe Rosenbaum and Abraham Weisbrot, Treasurers; Jack Leibowitz and Leibush Glas. The main initiative came from Yankel Silberman, who stimulated the effort and did much of the work himself, with considerable assistance from Isaac Milstein and Isaac Moro.

The work proved to be very difficult, not only financially. A bigger problem was the gathering of the material from the

12 Szydlowiec Memorial Book

landsleit. It was like crossing the Red Sea to get an article, a reminiscence, a description. After January 1969, when the practical work of our committee began, we made strenuous efforts to get as much material as possible, so that the life of the Jews of Szydlowiec, in all its shadings, would be reflected in the book. And we accomplished a great deal, collecting more than 200 articles from about 150 people. But because of the indifference or lack of cooperation on the part of some of the landsleit there were still gaps that we ourselves could not fill. The fault lies with those people who did not respond to our call.

For most of the areas of Jewish life in Szydlowiec there is rich and colorful material which was put into literary form by the editor, but which actually comes from the depths of the Jews in Szydlowiec — the worker and the artisan, the craftsman and the village peddler, the tradesman and the merchant, the religious and the secular, the Right and the Left.

It is gratifying to know that we were able to fulfill our task of immortalizing our native city and to make the deeds of its martyrs a living part of the Jewish national memory. For this, thanks are due to the small group of landsleit in New York who carried out this tremendous undertaking with so much love, devotion and determination.

The Szydlowiec Yizkor Book was published in 1974 in Yiddish, but since that language is no longer accessible to many of the younger generation of Szydlowiec landsleit born in the United States and other countries, the decision was made to publish a selection of material from the original volume in English translation, so that they might get to know at least a part of their parents' and grandparents' rich spiritual and cultural life that was so brutally destroyed by the Nazi murderers.

THE YIZKOR BOOK COMMITTEE

“HOW LONELY SITS THE CITY . . .”

by Akiba Berlinski

My heart pounds and my hand trembles as I pick up my pen to write a few words about my native city, which I left when I was very young.

In my mind's eye I see a Tisha B'Av in our home. My father, Reb Yisroel Moshe Aaron's, pious and God-fearing, weeps incessantly. Still a young boy, I do not understand why he is crying. I ask him:

“*Tatte*, why are you crying? All of us, thank God, are in good health.”

My father sighs deeply and replies:

“My dear child, I am mourning for our Holy Temple that was destroyed. The Aggadah tells us (and here he turns to the older children) that when the Temple was destroyed, the curtain of the Ark became wet with its own tears. Children, no matter how much we weep over that Destruction, it is still not enough.”

As he said this he took me by the hand and we walked over to the Ostrovtser Shtibl. Here we found the real setting for Tisha B'Av; all the lights turned off, except one, all the benches upside down, the Ark of the Torah bare, the worshippers sitting like mourners, their shoes off, and chanting hoarsely after the cantor, chanting and sighing the *Kinot*, many of them shedding tears.

“How lonely sits the city . . .” With these words Jeremiah, the greatest elegist of all time, begins his Lamentations, the mourning poem is unequalled in world literature. He himself suffered the awful pain, the longing for the place where his cradle once stood. Even the city grieves, he says, as it yearns for its children who were driven away.

And that is the meaning of the Yizkor books. The martyrs of all our towns and cities demand of us the proper eulogy for

14 Szydlowiec Memorial Book

our greatest *churban*.

Millions of Jews, including scholars and believers, including the naive and the innocent, were killed. And so I ask The Almighty: How can He sit on the Celestial Throne now, after all that has happened? I ask: Who betrayed whom? Was it the righteous Jews like Alter Freedman, for example, who ran in a hail of German bullets to the *mikveh*, so that he would be pure when he appeared before the Heavenly Throne? Or Rabbi Chaim Rabinowicz, who appealed to the Jews of Szydlowiec, assembled in the castle before they were deported:

“Fellow Jews, we are not leaving behind us anyone to say kaddish, so we are obliged to say kaddish for ourselves.”

And all the assembled Jews broke into a kaddish-lament the like of which has never been heard before in the world. So I ask: Who betrayed whom?

Even at the moment of death, Jews sanctified the Name of God and held on to the glory of the *shechina*, believing unquestionably in the words they whispered before every meal: “Though I walk through the valley of death’s shadow I shall fear no evil, for You are with me . . .”

Arise, O great Berditschever, and begin your well known *din-Torah* with the Almighty. This time He will not win. Let us make a pyramid out of the six million martyrs, so high that it will reach to the higher heaven and shake the Throne of the Master of the Universe, because “the voice of my brother’s blood still cries out from the earth!” Let us demand justice, and like Moses, ask: “*Lamah hareoso la-am ha-zeh?* Wherefore hast Thou dealt ill with this people?”

The poet Yaakov Glatshtein asks: “How can one pray to a God who allowed the destruction of a third of His people?” I, for one, do not understand the meaning of “God is righteous in all His ways.”

Most people feel an attachment to the place “where their

cradle stood." Our homes were destroyed there, but the strings of our hearts still vibrate to our own, "by the water of Babylon we sat and we wept." So it should not be surprising that there has been a steady stream of "Yizkor literature" during the twenty years after our most terrible *churban*. What is the whole world worth when compared with the home of our youth, of our songs and our dreams?

The world's most beautiful avenues are overshadowed by our little pond. The most elegant clubs in the world cannot compare to the splendor of our *bes-medresh* and our *shtiblech*. What are all the famous vacation resorts worth against the Sodek Forest, where the youthful romances of the yeshiva *bocherim* in the Hassidic *shtiblech* began?

Someone asked the young German playwright, Hochhut, author of *The Deputy*, in which he has Pope Pious XII get down on his knees, what his reason was for such a bold step. Hochhut replied: "Not *one* reason, but six million reasons, moved me to tell the world who else, by his silence, helped to fill a million barrels with blood."

So I stand with bowed head before one of those barrels, where the blood of my sister still seethes, the gentle Chanele and her sensitive husband Beyrech Weisbrot and the talented seven-year-old Monyiek, as well as the blood of all my scores of relatives.

The walls themselves weep at our *churban*!

SHIDLOVTSE, MY BIRTHPLACE

by Yitzhok Goldkorn

My *shtetl* Szydlowiec was bordered by fields, meadows, gardens and woods. Its Jewish community was a cross-section

of the vigorous and dynamic Jewish tribe in Poland. Szydlowiec was a Jewish shtetl of piety and tradition; a life concentrated around the synagogue, the study house and the Hassidic shtibl. The seasons of the year and the daily routine were felt not only in the rhythm of nature but also in the cycle of Jewish holidays, the Days of Awe, Shabbos, *shacharis*, *mincha-ma'ariv*, Torah study, *mitzvos* and helping the needy.

The shtetl also had its "commerce" — light industry and trade, prosperous businessmen, brokers, owners of tanneries, of stone-quarries, of iron foundries, little shoe factories, dry good stores, and many other sources of income.

Side by side with the "eastern wall" Jews — the Torah scholars, the communal leaders, the wealthy merchants — were the simple folk: harassed and worried Jews in unrelenting pursuit of unattainable means of livelihood; Jewish toilers, tailors, shoemakers, wagon-drivers, water-carriers, luftmentshn who lived from hand to mouth; impoverished Jews who existed like sparrows on the kernels and crumbs of the Wednesday fairs.

Parallel with the sweet, dreamy nigun of Torah, prayer, psalms, and *Pirkey Avot*, you could hear new "melodies" in Szydlowiec — Hatikva, the Bundist "Oath," the Internationale. The modern young people in Szydlowiec belonged to various secular "shtiblech" — Zionist, Bundist, Poale Zionist, Communist.

Through the mist of time I can see the vanished shtetl youth: the May first outings across fields and woods in the fragrant mornings; the mass meetings, election meetings, cultural events; the libraries of Tarbut, of the Bund, of the trade unions; lectures on various literary and social-political themes that were held in the movie theater *Illusion*.

Thus the bubbling Jewish life flowed in Szydlowiec during the week, in or around the tanneries, the stone-crushers, the iron foundries, the workshops that made shoes with special

soles, the “freight expeditions,” the fairs, and the ephemeral “businesses” on the one hand; and on the other, the Shabbos and Yom-tov rhythm of Torah, hassidim, Yiddish secular culture, national and social ideologies. Until — Until all of this was destroyed.

May your martyr’s death be immortalized in the sacred yizkor pages, and may the names of the martyrs and the memory of the nameless be transformed into eternal letters floating on high, in a heavenly Szydlowiec.

**FROM THE
BEGINNING
TO 1918**

AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF SZYDLOWIEC

by E. Lifshutz

Jewish and non-Jewish historians have for a long time been in a disagreement as to when Jews first settled in Poland. The Polish historian Maciejowski maintains that "There were Jews in Poland, if not as early as the eighth century, then definitely in the ninth." However, others, such as Dr. Bernard D. Weinryb, doubt that there were Jews in Poland before the twelfth century. Even if one accepts that most conservative estimate of the date Jews settled in Poland, it is clear that they lived there for about eight hundred years.

In the sixteenth century, Poland began to be an important Jewish community — the greatest Torah center in Europe — and was already beginning to provide Rabbis for various European and non-European Jewish communities. Young men came from afar to study in Polish Yeshivas. The prestige of the Council of Four Lands (a conference of Rabbis and community leaders) only underlined the importance of the Polish-Jewish community.

Throughout the centuries, the Jews of Poland suffered persecutions by the Church and were the victims of large-scale planned attacks and false accusations, such as the one alleging that they had stolen the Host. Many Jews were martyred because of blood-accusations, and many were the victims of such colossal catastrophes as those of 1648 and 1649. Jews also suffered with the general population from various invasions, such as the one by the Tartars in 1241 and the Swedish attack of 1655-1656.

Polish kings generally regarded the Jews as necessary to the economy of the country, and they therefore gave them opportunities for increased freedom of trade. Jewish life in

Poland was less limited, and Jews were less persecuted than in most Western European countries, but the description by some Polish historians of Poland as a "Paradise for Jews" is, of course, a grotesque exaggeration.

But when writing the history of a Jewish community, it is nevertheless very surprising to find that even before the Holocaust so few Jewish historical documents were preserved. This is true even of old, established communities such as Szydlowiec. In West European communities such as those in Germanic lands, there are a great many more documents, community registers, and private materials. The communities of the German provinces were smaller, more isolated, and often subject to expulsions, from which the Jews of Poland hardly suffered at all. What is the explanation for this scarcity of Polish-Jewish documents— Fires alone are not the answer, for it was not only in Polish cities and shtetlekh that blazes were often daily occurrences.

The Western European Jews found among their educated neighbors people who took an interest in Jewish life and customs, and who wrote works which remained after them. In Poland this was rarer, and in recent years Polish scholars have often displayed a talent for writing about towns in which Jews were an extremely visible portion of the population, without even mentioning the Jews. A Polish encyclopedia could recently write about Szydlowiec, which until the Holocaust had a population that was approximately eighty percent Jewish, and not even mention that Jews had lived in this town for several hundred years.

In the nineteenth century, German-Jewish men of learning, mostly Rabbis, began to preserve Jewish historical documents; some of them wrote histories of their communities. Polish Rabbis, however, did not concern themselves with Jewish historical documents. In addition, the Holocaust destroyed the last documentary traces of many larger and

certainly of smaller Jewish communities, among which Szydłowiec is no exception.

Szydłowiec is approximately thirty kilometers southwest of Radom. The village of Szydłowiec already existed as early as the thirteenth century. In the early fifteenth century, the village, along with large tracts of land surrounding it, was given to the two brothers Jakob and Slawko Odrowaz. The second of these, Slawko or Stanislaw, along with the title to the region, also took the name of the village Szydłowiec. In 1427 the former village acquired the rights of a town. In 1432, Slawko Szydłowiecki completed building the Church of Saint Zigmund, and when he died in 1493 at the age of 88, he was buried in this church. In 1470, Kazimierz Jagielonczyk permitted Szydłowiecki to expand the town, and this prompted trade there. Stanislaw Szydłowiecki was the "marshalek" in the court of Kazimierz Jagielonczyk and was a member of the royal circle.

After Stanislaw's death, the title to the town and the entire area was taken over by his son Krzysztof Szydłowiecki (1467-1532), who was the Cracow "Kasztelan" and Royal Chancellor. He was brought up in the court of Kazimierz Jagielonczyk. Krzysztof Szydłowiecki made the town a commercial center for the surrounding area when in 1505 he persuaded Zigmund the First to conduct two fairs annually. Krzysztof Szydłowiecki did not leave any male heirs; his three sons had died while he was still alive. Immediately after his death, his wife gave birth to a daughter. The daughter, Elzbieta, was married at the age of fourteen (1548—) to Mikolai Radziwil, who, along with the much younger Elzbieta, his second wife, also acquired the title of Szydłowiec.

After his brother Krzysztof's death, Mikolai Szydłowiecki became the landholder of the town until Radziwil took over the rule. In 1550 he repealed the special fees that were paid during the fairs and eased other restrictions in order to attract the

24 Szydlowiec Memorial Book

town's residents to trade. This helped broaden the scope of the fairs and improved the economy of the shtetl.

In 1589 Zigmund III permitted the town to conduct five fairs annually, and this strengthened trade even further. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Szydlowiec already had a significant number of shoemakers, tanneries, distilleries, as well as quarries which produced millstones, whetstones and other stone products. The fairs also increased the number of smithies in the shtetl. In 1510-1526, Mikolai Szydlowiecki, Krzysztof's brother, built the Castle, which added to the city's impressiveness. The Castle was later improved by the Radziwils.

* * *

Jews probably settled in Szydlowiec in the middle of the sixteenth century. Although we have no precise information about this, the increased number of fairs and also the fact that a Radziwil was landholder are strong indications of the presence of Jews. The Radziwils were traditionally strong supporters of the development of commerce, and were inclined to allow Jews to settle on their lands and in towns because they believed that Jews brought great benefits wherever they settled and helped economically strengthen the towns where they were permitted to live. It is very likely that Jews had already begun to settle in Szydlowiec even before the time of the Radziwils, perhaps after the town acquired the right to conduct fairs. However, we have no proof of this.

The earliest information that we have about Szydlowiec as an organized community dates from much later — from the last decade of the seventeenth century. This information concerns a Rabbi of a great renown in the Jewish world — Rabbi MaHaRam Ash. (*Ash* is the abbreviation of *Eisenstadt*, the town where Rabbi Meir served as Rabbi for 27 years, from 1717 until his death in 1744.) He is

the author of several works, the most famous of which is the two volume *Ponim Me'iros*.

The young genius became Rabbi of Szydlowiec, probably in 1693-1700. Later, the MaHaRam Ash was Rabbi in Prosnitz, Moravia and in Eisenstadt, Hungary, where he died in his early seventies.

Rabbi Meir left Szydlowiec not because he was looking for a larger community, but because the small Jewish community in Szydlowiec could not yet afford to maintain a Yeshiva. It is evident that the young Rabbi's association with the community was a close and a warm one, because about a quarter of a century later, after he had already served as Rabbi in important communities and his fame had grown in the rabbinical world, he returned to Poland to become Rabbi of Szydlowiec for the second time. This time the Jewish community of Szydlowiec could afford to comply with its Rabbi's request and opened a Yeshiva under his supervision.

There are indications that at approximately this time, Szydlowiec was already a community which the Council of Four Lands could find worthy of consideration. It is stated in a 1719(—) statute of the Council of the Four Lands that the village of Przysucho is part of the environs of Szydlowiec. This indicates that Szydlowiec was even then a kind of center for the surrounding smaller villages.

A non-Jewish source dating from the end of the third quarter of the 18th century provides some information about the general situation of the Jews of Szydlowiec. Johann Philip DeCarosi, a natural scientist, geologist and mineralogist, came to Poland at the invitation of King Stanislaw August Poniatowski, to study salt mining and mining in general. In the years 1778-1780, DeCarosi travelled throughout Poland in the course of his researches. During that time, he wrote lengthy letters to his friend, the famous Polish statesman and economist, Count August Masinski, and in these letters he

wrote the following about Szydlowiec:

"The Jewish quarter is entirely built of wood; however, it takes up a great deal more space than does the Christian section. The houses, which are more crowded together here, are mostly in good condition. However, the streets are without organization, and, aside from the sturdy stone bathhouse, they are dirty and foul-smelling.

At the same time, we can see here how right Moses was when he gave his brethren the Commandment of cleanliness, and how little this advice availed. Judging by the area which the Jewish section occupies, and by the Jewish habit of living crowded together, the number of Jews here must be ten times the number of Christians. In compliance with their principles, they are not engaged in noble and clean occupations, and the commerce of the area lies entirely in their hands. They deal not only in commodities that come to us from abroad, but also in items that are produced in our area, such as a pig iron, cast iron, wood for furniture and construction, and millstones and whetstones that are produced in the village of Pogorzaly, which belongs to the local nobleman. In addition to this, they deal in mortar, grain, liquor, hides, and so forth."

Why DeCarosi felt that dealing in millstones, whetstones, iron, furniture, grain, mortar, hides and even liquor was not "noble and clean," remains his secret.

In 1765 — about the time that DeCarosi visited Szydlowiec — there were, according to a Polish census, 902 Jews in the shtetl and the surrounding area. We know that the Polish censuses were inaccurate. They were usually taken for fiscal purposes, such as head taxes, and so forth. Jews would find out beforehand when a government agent was supposed to visit, and many people, especially poor people who could not pay the taxes, would hide when the agent came. This meant that the number stated in the census of the year 1765 was much smaller than the actual number of Jews in Szydlowiec at that time.

The town suffered badly during the Swedish invasion. In 1666 there was a total of 478 inhabitants in Szydlowiec. In the eighteenth century, Szydlowiec began to recuperate. By the

time DeCarosi visited the town — about 1765 — there were already 203 houses in Szydłowiec. We know that in 1828 there were 3160 residents living in 263 houses, which means that there were 12 residents to a house. Therefore in DeCarosi's time, the general number of inhabitants was 2400 in 203 houses. Since in 1828 the number of Jews was already 2049 out of a general total of 3160, we can also assume that the proportion some sixty years earlier was not very different and that in 1765 the number of Jews was at least fifty percent higher than the Polish census indicated.

In the nineteenth century, the Jewish population of Poland increased greatly. In 1816 there were 212,944 Jews in Poland, out of a general population of 2,732,234. At that time Jews comprised 7.8 percent of the population. In 1909 there were already 1,747,655 Jews in Poland, out of a general population of 11,935,318, with Jews comprising 14.6 percent of the population. In the years 1831-1855, the Jewish natural increase was proportionately higher than among non-Jewish.

In Szydłowiec, this rapid growth was evident. This can be seen in the following figures:

<i>Year</i>	<i>General Population of Szydłowiec</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Percentage of Jews in Population</i>
1827	3,160	2,049	64.8
1840	3,602	2,321	64.4
1865	3,798	2,780	73.2
1893	6,423	4,599	71.6
1909	7,958	5,971	75.0
1910	8,597	6,433	74.8

In 1909, there were only ten towns in all of Poland whose populations were three-quarters Jewish, and one of these was Szydłowiec.

In 1788, Duke Radziwil, the landholder of Szydłowiec,

granted Jews an area of land so that they could build a synagogue, fence off a cemetery, build homes, and so expand the Jewish quarter. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Szydłowiec passed from the hands of the Radziwils to the Sapiehas. The Sapiehas, however, did not hold title to the town for long; the town was freed from the rule by nobles, and fell under direct Czarish power. In the years 1825-1862, Jews were not permitted to live outside the limits of the Jewish quarter. In 1862, the Polish administrator of the land, Count Alexander Wielopolski, abolished all legal restrictions for the Jews of Poland and, consequently, for the Jews of Szydłowiec as well.

In 1828, of the 263 houses in Szydłowiec, 45 were already of brick. Weekly market days were conducted, and twelve fairs were held each year, strengthening commerce in the town. Even fifty years later, the brick houses belonged to wealthy non-Jewish townsmen and to a few wealthy Jews. In July 1876, a fire broke out in the town, and as the Radom correspondent Israel Frankel writes in *HaZefira*, the blaze consumed all Jewish homes, “and only the synagogue and the *Beis Midrosh* [prayer and study house] were left standing as if by a miracle.” The “miracle” was due to the fact that both the synagogue and the *Beis Midrosh* were brick buildings.

At the end of the eighties, some ten years after the blaze, there were 330 houses in Szydłowiec, and 171 of these were already of brick.

In the revolution of 1905, Jews took part in the underground activities. Every older resident of Szydłowiec knew someone who in those stormy days was a member of the Jewish revolutionary parties.

The recently opened Okrana (Russian Secret Police) Archive in Poland informs us that “in Szydłowiec, Konsk District, the Post Office and City Council were invaded and the

building superintendents were disarmed" by revolutionaries. This was such a daring act that the Radom governor, E.P. Shtshirovski, informed the Warsaw Governor General, G.A. Skalon, of it on January 3, 1905.

On the night of December 15, 1905, a group of revolutionaries invaded the office of the manager of the forest near Szydłowiec, tore up the portraits of the Emperor and took away the weapons they found here. "The following day," the report states, "probably the same group attacked the forest guards and took their weapons, insignia and all official documents." The attacks on Czarist officials and Czarist offices in and around a town whose population was three-quarters Jewish could not have been carried out without Jews.

In a work about Polish towns which was published several years ago, it is clearly stated that in the years 1905-1906 in Szydłowiec, "the revolutionary movement was especially strongly developed among the Jewish poor."

The first World War freed Szydłowiec from Czarist control. The mild Austrian military regime hardly made itself noticeable. The town, like all of Poland, suffered from hunger, but spiritually Szydłowiec was liberated. Various political and professional associations were established, and young people were caught up in national and social currents.

In the Minorities Treaty of 1919 Poland "undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants without distinction of birth, nationality, race or religion." In almost the same words, this promise was repeated in the Constitution of 1921. However, Jews soon realized that the promise had absolutely no substance. Not only were they not considered equal citizens and not permitted to hold government positions, but the government often supported those who waged an economic battle against Jewish businessmen and workers. The harassment and the constant excess constituted an open war to drive Jews from the land

where they had lived for nearly a thousand years.

Poland was a state composed of various nationalities. The minorities — Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, Belorussians and Russians — amounted to over thirty percent of the population. The Polish government was conducted by its leaders as if it were a homogeneous country of Poles only. All minorities were oppressed and persecuted; against Jews, who comprised over ten percent of the population, there was exerted a policy of economic extermination.

This policy, of course, also affected the Jews of Szydlowiec, but not with the force that it affected Jews in the larger cities. In Szydlowiec, over three-quarter of the population was Jewish. Here there could be no talk of boycotts, with rowdy pickets and constant fights. The non-Jewish element was too small here for such large-scale anti-Semitic activities. However, the Jewish industrialist in Szydlowiec had to sell his goods on the general market, and there he met the strong opposition that Poland brought to bear against everything that had to do with Jews.

The first census in the new Poland of 1921 showed that Szydlowiec had a general population of 7,200 and a Jewish population of 5,501 (77.1 percent). In the 1920's and 1930's the town was "proletarianized." A new industry was added, which lay entirely in Jewish hands. This was the mechanized shoe industry, which employed hundreds of Szydlowiec Jews. The stitchers, the cobblers and the master craftsmen were all Jews. The shoes manufactured in Szydlowiec were sold in the farthest reaches of Poland. In addition to this, Szydlowiec possessed older industries, such as its fourteen tanneries, some of which were so well equipped and so highly mechanized that they were comparable to the most modern tanneries in Poland. Some tanneries imported not only the newest machines from Germany, but even German master craftsmen and specialists. The owners of all the tanneries were Jewish.

The quarries — all ten — also belonged to Jews. The stone

industry was not new to Szydlowiec. As can be seen in DeCarosi's description, in the eighteenth century Szydlowiec Jews had already dealt in millstones and whetstones which came from the town's cliffs. The cliffs in Szydlowiec also caused the development of a local industry — tombstone carving. However, the Szydlowiec tombstones were of a distinctive nature.

In 1958, the two Christian art historian, Jacek Antoni Zelinski and Lucina Krakowska, discovered in the Szydlowiec cemetery a large number of tombstones which had survived the Nazi ravages. They were astounded to find that beside the traditional motifs some of the tombstones contained exceptional idyllic scenes.

Before the Holocaust, Szydlowiec also had metal workshops and a factory of agricultural tools, which belonged to Jews. In addition, it should be noted that there were a larger number of home industries: tailors, dressmakers and seamstresses.

The active economy of Jewish Szydlowiec would have been impossible without the fraternal help which this shtetl, like almost all Polish-Jewish shtetlekh and larger communities, received from the American "Joint". The "Joint" established funds for free-loan societies, supported Jewish institutions and helped support poor Jews, who often constituted a large portion of the Jewish community. The support provided by children and relatives in America was also of great help.

How large was the population of Szydlowiec before the Nazi invasion— A. Rutkowski, who researched the destruction of the Jews of Szydlowiec, states that "in 1939 there are 7,200 Jews living in Szydlowiec — nearly 90 percent of all the inhabitants," and the anonymous author of the introduction to the exhibit, *Matsevot Beyt ha-Kevurot HaYehudi BeShidloutse*, believes that in 1938, Szydlowiec already had a population of 10,300, 78 percent of whom were Jews.

In the years 1940-1941, Jews from nearby as well as from more remote localities poured into Szydlowiec, until the number reached approximately twelve thousand. This occurred because at that time the Szydlowiec ghetto was somewhat more peaceful than other ghettos in the area. In the first two years, the Nazi butchers in Szydlowiec accepted bribes while creating an illusion of security. In this way they caused more Jews to fall into their snares.

In mid-1942 — before the September 1942 deportation to Treblinka and before the great slaughter — over fifteen thousand Jews were herded together and driven into Szydlowiec. Szydlowiec was the last stage before their annihilation. Their deaths marked the extinction of a venerable Jewish community which had been in existence for no less than 400 years.

RABBIS AND REBBEIM OF SZYDLOWIEC

by BERL KAGAN

(What follows is not a chronological history of the rabbis and rebbeim in and of Szydlowiec. These are mainly sketches of their characteristics and certain episodes associated with Szydlowiec's rabbinical personalities.)

R'Meir ben Yitzhok Eisenstadt (1670-1744)

One of the great scholars of his time, he was rabbi in Szydlowiec about 250 years ago. He is better known by the title of his principal book, *Panim Me'ivot*, published in Amsterdam. He was a grandson of Shabbatai Ben Meir HaKohen's sister and son-in-law of Rabbi Moses Sochachewer, Parnes of the province of Posen.

Rabbi Meir was at first a *dayan* in Sochachew for several years, then became rabbi in Szydlowiec for a short time. From there he went to Worms, then became head of the Bet Din in Prossnitz, Moravia (Czechoslovakia), where he was rabbi for ten years. Here a strange thing happened: For reasons not clear to us, Rabbi Eisenstadt left Prossnitz and went to Szydlowiec for the second time, where he occupied the rabbinical post for five years. In 1717 or 1718 he became head of the *Bet Din* in Eisenstadt, where he was rabbi for thirty years, until his death in 1744.

R'Elazar Eisenstadt

After Rabbi Meir, his son Elazar became rabbi in Szydlowiec. This was about the middle of the 18th century. No other facts about his life are known to us.

R' Leybush Szydlowiecer

Szydlowiec was a Hassidic town, with many *shtiblekh*, and followers of various Hassidic *rebbeim* in Poland. Szydlowiec Hassidim itself, in and around the *shtetl*, was connected with the Rabinowicz dynasty, whose root is the *Yehudi HaKodesh* of Pshyshke. But first we must mention one Hassidic rebbe in Szydlowiec who did *not* belong to the Rabinowicz dynasty.

He was called Rebbe Leyb or Rebbe Leybush Szydlowiecer and was the leader of the Hassidim there from 1814. Whether he was a rebbe somewhere else before that time we do not know. In general, not much is known about him except that he was a student of the *Zeer of Lublin* and of *Yehudi HaKodesh*, and was an excellent scholar himself. That he was more than an ordinary Hassidic rebbe and that his name was known far beyond the borders of Szydlowiec is evident from the following:

The great Menahem Mendel of Kotsk was a student of the *Yehudi HaKodesh*. After the latter's death, Menahem Mendel

went looking for a new rebbe for himself, and while doing so he came to Rebbe Leybush in Szydlowiec to study. The Kotsker Rebbe later began his account of that experience this way: "I sat on a bench in Szydlowiec and I 'learned.' " Every day someone would come and bring me a bagel and water — that was my whole meal.

R' Yeshaya Mushkat

One of the great rabbis of his generation. He was one of the best students of the Kozenitzer Magid and considered to be a holy man who prayed for the Jewish people and never refused anyone. One of his early rabbinical posts was in Szydlowiec, but apparently it was not of long duration. He died in 1868.

R'Nathan David Szydlowiecr the First

The chain of the Szydlowiec Hassidic dynasty begins with Rebbe Nathan David, whose family name was Rabinowicz. He was born in Pshyskhe in 1814. In 1838 he became leader of the Hassidim in Szydlowiec and held that post until his death in 1865.

Rebbe Nathan David was well known in the Polish Hassidic world, though he added nothing new to Hassidic thought. Thousands of Hassidim would come to visit him, including the Hassidic leaders of his generation. There is hardly a book in the literature of Hassidic tales in which his name is not mentioned.

Someone once asked Rebbe Nathan David: "In the *Shemona Esra* it says — 'And the slanderers shall have no hope.' How come? Isn't there a verse in Psalms that says, 'May the sins disappear from the earth, and then there would no longer be any sinners.' " To this Rebbe Nathan David replied: "You can pray that all other kinds of sinners should repent, but not slanderers, because right before they repent they might slander Jews again."

Rebbe Nathan David once met Rebbe Yehezkel of Kuzmir, who greeted him with words of Torah. Nathan David responded: The Scriptures say, "Moses listened and it sounded good to him." From this we learn that it is better to listen to others than to have others listen to you."

There is a good deal in the Hassidic literature about Rebbe Nathan David's father, Rebbe Yerakhmiel, who owned his own carriage and three horses. When his wife asked him what he needed it for, he replied: "Better the animals should be in the stable than in the house . . ."

R' Joseph Gelbloom

Rebbe Nathan David died in 1866. And although his son Rebbe Tzemekh apparently took over his father's post in Szydlowiec, we know for certain that twelve years later Rebbe Joseph Ben Avigdor Gelbloom officially became religious head of the community. Rebbe Joseph was born in 1840 and must have been Hassidic leader in Szydlowiec for many years, because in 1912 he was still rebbe there.

Rebbe Shraga Yair Rabinowicz

Son of Rebbe Nathan David the First. Born in 1839 in Szydlowiec. One of the most popular and esteemed Polish Hassidic leaders around the turn of the century. He is primarily known as the Rebbe of Bialobzeg, where he was religious leader. After the big fire there he moved to Radom, where he was Rebbe from 1907 until his death in 1912. He was buried in Szydlowiec. Thousands of Hassidim carried his coffin all the way from Radom to his burial place.

The Last Rabbis and Rebbeim of Szydlowiec

Rebbe Shraga Yair had an only son, Nathan David. After the death of his father in 1912, Nathan David became head of the Bet Din in Szydlowiec, as well as Rebbe for his father's

Hassidim. In order not to confuse him with his grandfather, we refer to him as Rebbe Nathan David the Second. In his middle age he became blind, but was still able to study Talmud by heart. Like his father, he was an ardent lover of Jewish music. He himself composed melodies and made an effort to bring more and more new melodies into his synagogue. Rebbe Nathan David the Second died in Szydlowiec in 1919.

After his death, the post of rabbi in Szydlowiec was taken over by his son, Chaim Yisroel Sholom Yekutiel Rabinowicz, who was only twenty years old. R' Chaim Yisroel spent a good deal of his time on communal affairs. After World War I, funds from American Jews were sent to him for the needy Jews of Szydlowiec. He was the last rabbi in Szydlowiec. On the 12th of Tishri, 1943 he and his family were murdered by the Nazis.

SZYDLOWIEC IN PEACEFUL TIMES

by Motl Eisenberg

Szydlowiec was a typical Jewish shtetl, like hundreds of others in Poland. The Jews there felt they had roots in the town going back many many generations. At the outskirts of Szydlowiec lived the Poles — about 20% of the population — who earned their livelihood from the Jews.

Szydlowiec had three large marketplaces, which the people called Upper Market, Lower Market and Upper Highway. The Upper Market was the “fashionable” part of town, containing the City Hall and an ancient historical building with a high tower. Living in the Lower Market were mainly the Jewish poor, the handicraftsmen and the small shopkeepers. In the very center of this market was a large circular building, also historical, which the Jews called “*Di Bodns*”. This contained only stores.

The Lower Market was the main center of the town. On Fridays a fishmarket, which supplied Jews with fish for Shabbos, was located here. Here also were the guest-houses where strangers and poor visitors found food and shelter. Here friends met, here people made business deals, talked politics. The place was always busy and noisy. On one side of the Lower Market was a small street that led to the "Big *Bes-Medresh*" and the "Little *Bes-Medresh*," and to the large, beautiful synagogue behind which were the old and new cemeteries.

The Upper Highway was settled mostly by Jewish wagon-drivers, blacksmiths, carpenters, petty traders and some Polish families. Close to the road was Lazer Redlich's button factory, which employed a large number of Jewish girls, most of whom also took work home — sewing buttons on cards. The Upper Highway was the "port" from which, every morning, wagons buses and buggies carried freight and passengers to Radom and Warsaw.

Gravestones in Szydlowiec testified to a Jewish presence there going back at least 400 years. Life in the town flowed smoothly, with no upheavals, and it never occurred to anyone that this would ever change.

Religious life was dominant, forcing its ironclad rules and customs on everyone, regulating the personal and social life of every Jew in the town. Woe to him or her who deviated from the established order. The synagogue, the *bes-medresh*, the *shtibl* — these were a second home to every Jew. Some men came in the morning, davened at top speed, and ran off to their occupations. Others, who came very early, would sit down at the open *gemoras* and "learn" with great zeal until late in the day.

Shabbos and holidays all the houses of worship were packed. Young and old, in their best clothes, would hurry to services. Everything stopped — all the stores were closed, all the workshops idle, the marketplaces empty. A reverent

holiday atmosphere rested over all the Jewish houses.

The living-standard of the Jews in Szydlowiec was very low. Most people were poor. From early morning to late at night they worked hard to support their families. Very important to Jewish livelihoods were the weekly fairs that took place every Wednesday. All three markets filled up with wagons loaded with products brought by the peasants from surrounding villages.

Jewish blacksmiths, their toolboxes hanging from their shoulders, circulated among the horses, and the peasants would hire them put new shoes on their animals. The peasants — men and women — besieged the food stores, buying or trading, kerosene, salt, sugar, herring, dry goods. Tailoring and hatmaker shops were crowded with peasants measuring sizes or choosing colors.

The six thousand Jews in Szydlowiec were about 80% of the total population. Mostly they were self-employed handicraftsmen and shopkeepers, with a small class of manufacturers and entrepreneurs and a small number of proletarians employed mostly in the Jewish shoe-and-leather factories. There were twelve mechanized leather factories in the town, a good number of smaller shoe factories, several stone-quarries, a larger mechanized mill, two Jewish cooperative banks, two button factories, a brewery, an iron foundry, and a sawmill. Considering the size of the population, Szydlowiec's economic life was very dynamic.

The leather industry in our town was the nerve-center of the economy, providing a livelihood for about 200 workers, as well as dealers who traveled throughout Poland and brought back freight cars of the rawhide; dealers in coal, kindling, chemicals, lime; shipping clerks at the railroad station; porters who unloaded the wagons, drivers for transporting the goods; brokers who dealt with out-of-town buyers for the leather; brokers who loaned money at interest.

Szydlowiec was well known in the Hassidic world. It was the home of the famous Rebbe Nathan David, who started a dynasty of great *rebbeim*. On every holiday, hassidim came to Szydlowiec to see him and later his successor.

Our town was distinguished for its "*sheyne yidn*" — scholars, communal leaders, philanthropists, shrewd Hassidim, neatly dressed and with well-kept beards. All of them enjoyed the great respect of the Jewish population. The religious leaders were carefully chosen men, renowned scholars. The rabbi and the dayanim arbitrated all religious and communal disagreements among Jews. Whenever two parties could not settle their difference between them, they arranged a *din-torah*; the decision of the *beth-din* was binding.

That was Jewish life in Szydlowiec. It was slow, calm, without upheavals. Generations came and went. Neither wars nor historic events changed the old way of life. Everyone conducted his modest life at his workbench or counter, lived out his years in the circle of his family and friends. Everyone knew everyone else. People wished each other a good morning. Whenever things were going bad for someone, or if someone was ill, the news spread quickly and then hundreds of Jews, men and women, were concerned, interested, and wherever necessary, they helped in a material way. Everyone's private life was an open book, a family affair.

It was around 1910-11 that I joined the circle of young readers of Yiddish books. And since I lived in my own small "apartment" in a quiet corner of our factory building, with a separate entrance, I became the keeper of our new books. Members of the circle used to come and borrow books, and in this way I made many friends. In time the circle expanded. Young fellows and girls from well-to-do homes used to sneak very cautiously into my apartment to borrow books.

At one of our meetings we voted to set up a secret library in my apartment. Each member pledged to donate his own

books. The books were sorted, catalogued and numbered. It was the first library ever created in Szydlowiec.

One day we received a new book that had just been published in Vilna. It was called *Yiddisher Biblioteke* and contained a call to establish libraries in every town. It also had a form for a petition, in Russian, addressed to the Governor of the respective region; it was to be signed by two house-holders, in whose name the permit would be issued. We found two such people — Yehiel Dimont, who hated the Hassidim, and Aaron Fisher, the town feldsher, and the only Jew in Szydlowiec who wore a short jacket and a short beard. Fisher considered himself a modern progressive man.

Some time later — much to our surprise — the permit for the library arrived. In those days, under Tsarist rule, this was a great victory. We made every effort to find a place and finally succeeded in getting two large rooms in the home of a Pole. Some of our members who were carpenters built a bookcase, tables and chairs. The news about the opening of this place where young people could gather to read books spread like wildfire. It created both a sensation and a storm of protest. Meetings were called. The decision of the *bet-din* was that on Friday evening after services this matter would be discussed publicly in the synagogue and the *bes-medresh* and that the Jews of Szydlowiec would be warned against this threat to Yidishkeit, and that everyone would be instructed to keep their sons and daughters out of that forbidden place. Furthermore, the leaders of this movement would be placed in *herem* — excommunicated.

Many in our circle were intimidated by this storm and withdrew, leaving only a few determined, fearless individuals who held fast to their position. A delegation of three — Beynish Tenenbaum, Yerakhmiel Greenberg and myself — reported to Rabbi Eleazar, head of the *beth-din*, that we were not going to take this provocation lying down, that we would protest the

herem, that we had founded our library with the Governor's permission and that no one had the right to obstruct us. Rabbi Eleazar did not take our warning lightly.

But our work suffered. The young people had been frightened away from us. Then, in the summer of 1914, when the war broke out, Russian soldiers were billeted in Szydlowiec and all available space was requisitioned for the military, including our library. Our activity was thus effectively halted for a long time.

The outbreak of the war brought troubled times for the Jewish population. Russian armies marching through the countryside terrorized the civilian population, especially the Jews. Jewish livelihoods were disrupted. The whole economy was paralyzed. A typical war-time business deveoped.

After several turns of military fortune our town was occupied by the Austrian army. The Jews breathed more easily, happy to rid of the Russian satraps under whose rule they were not certain of their lives. Friendly relationships developed with the Austrian occupation authorities. A new era of political and cultural freedom opened for the Jews. The young people started meeting again, openly. Interest in cultural matters rose. The reading circle grew. At its first general meeting we decided to set ourselves up as independent organization named KULTURA, for the dissemination of education and culture. An executive committee was elected consisting of Reuben and Israel Zucker, Berish and Joseph Tenenbaum, and myself.

A feverish cultural activity began. We recruited young people from well-to-do homes, from poor homes, from religiously observant homes. The drive for knowledge and education was irresistible. Our library was always busy. Hundreds of readers borrowed books. The reading room — it contained Yiddish newspapers and magazines — was full every evening. We arranged lectures on political, literary and social

topics, by our own and outside speakers. At these discussions everyone was free to express his or her own opinion.

In order to raise funds for our ever-increasing activities we organized dramatic groups that presented works by famous Yiddish playwrights. This activity too brought us both funds and new members.

Years passed. The big world outside was astir with great events. Problems ripened whose solution would bring about great changes in the world. Mighty empires were threatened with collapse. Small peoples demanded independence. Old regimes fell. Revolution in Russia. The Balfour Declaration aroused great hopes among Jews, a new interest in world political events.

At a general meeting of KULTURA we adopted a proposal to change our society into a general Zionist organization. Our circle lost its previous independent character and became a political institution. A number of prominent members left our ranks because of their opposition to Zionism.

All our youthful ardor was now turned to Zionist activity. And there was plenty of work to do; maintaining the normal activity of our library, readings and discussions every Saturday, organizing young people to be halutzim, meetings to raise funds for Keren Kayemet and Keren Hayesod. The political work for the Zionist organization in Poland demanded great effort from us: participation in the kehillas that were then being organized on a democratic basis, getting into the city council, leading the election campaign to the Polish parliament (Sejm).

At that time a Mizrahi group was also organized under the leadership of Yerakhmiel Haim Blizinski. It attracted many of the older generation — middle class people, artisans, small merchants and just plain people who sympathized with the Zionist vision and were hostile to the authoritative Hassidic

leaders who had dominated Jewish life up to that point.

There was also an active group of young people around *Betar*, who were followers of Jabotinsky's political ideas.

A strong Bundist movement attracted workers and handicraftsmen. It opened a library, organized trade unions, led strikes, arranged lectures and in general conducted an active program that had its effect in the town.

The Orthodox circles, organized in Agudas Israel, were also a strong force in Szydlowiec. The communal leaders — Hassidim, scholars, people who had always influenced religious matters and enjoyed the respect of the masses of Jews — belonged to Aguda.

All these activities, political and cultural, gradually changed the appearance of the town and gave it a new coloration. In Shlomo Eisenberg's house a "kino" was opened which showed better films and occasional stage plays.

In the elections to Szydlowiec's city council, out of 14 Jewish councilmen, three Zionists were elected: Yerakhmiel Greenberg, Pinkert and myself. Out of 24 councilmen, the Jews had a majority. At their first meeting, the newly elected councilmen chose an executive consisting of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and two alderman. The Jews voted for a list which nominated Pinkert for Deputy Mayor and one Jewish alderman, so that out of four members of the city administration, two were Jews. The Polish councilmen were incensed by this and protested vehemently to the Jewish councilmen: it was simply unthinkable that a Jew should be elected Deputy Mayor in a Polish city. All the Polish councilmen formed a united front around this issue, including the National Democrats, the Socialists and two Communists.

The anti-Semitic mood in Poland was growing more acute, enveloping broader and broader circles of the people. The political parties competed against each other in propagating Jew-hatred. A mass psychosis developed. The government

began following a policy which ruined the economic life of Polish Jewry. The impoverishment of the Jews deepened. Competition was fierce; merchants sold their wares at a loss. Bankruptcies mounted. Jewish workers and handicraftsmen worked for starvation wages. A movement started to open a cooperative bank to help the Jewish small businessmen with loans and credits. The Bank Ludowi (Peoples Bank) proved so useful and popular that another cooperative bank was established, Bank Kupietski (Commerical Bank). Both of these Jewish banks were always busy. The need for credit was urgent. A large selection of the population was living from trade and manufacturing.

With Hitler's rise to power in Germany, economic woes took second place. Now the primary concern was for sheer survival. In mid-1939 this concern reached a high point — the air smelled more and more of gunpowder. Very soon — in mid-August 1939 — the gunpowder exploded: Hitler attacked Poland.

The panic among the Jews were awful. But not one of us even imagined at that time how cruel a fate the Nazi murderers were preparing for the Jews.

OF TIMES GONE BY

by Moshe Yehiel Schwartzfuter

A long, long time ago Szydlowiec was considered the metropolis of the entire region. The Jews of the small towns and villages in the area depended on Szydlowiec when the time came for a wedding, a *bris* or a burial. People said there were gravestones in the old cemetery in Szydlowiec that were 500 years old.

Szydlowiec grew in importance because of the Warsaw-Cracow railroad that was constructed not far from the town. Older people in Szydlowiec used to talk about the time when the only illumination in the town was by candlelight or oil. I remember the first electric lights (1907 or 1908) that were hung in three places: the city hall, the baths, and on the Radom highway. When they were turned on every evening, all the children came running to behold the miracle.

The Jews in Szydlowiec (they were the majority of the population) didn't allow the peasants to bully them. If it ever happened that a peasant bothered a Jewish peddler in a village, the Jews always evened accounts with him when he came into town.

I remember one incident when a rumor spread that a mob was gathering "to make a pogrom" in Szydlowiec during a fair. They were supposed to come from the direction of Skarzisk. The Jews — with the help of some friendly non-Jewish neighbors — went to the outskirts of town that day and taught their uninvited "guests" a lesson. Then they came back to the marketplace in town and did the same for some peasants who had been waiting for their "friends" from Skarzisk. The Jews further warned the peasants by burning their grain, by poisoning their horses, and so on. The peasants were afraid of the Jews. Jozek Patkowski, a wealthy Pole, who owned a tavern across the city hall, called Yehiel Zucker and me in and swore that he had nothing to do with those who had planned the pogrom.

Shabbes and holidays the cares of the world were forgotten. The favorite holiday was Purim; certainly it was the most important one for the poorer Jews in Szydlowiec. The entire *shalachmones* custom was so arranged that the poor people would benefit most out of it. It was the custom on Purim to leave the doors of the houses open all evening, so that all those who were making the rounds to collect *shalachmones*

could get to as many places as possible. Aside from the poor, there were also masked collectors from various groups who turned their "receipts" over to the needy. I recall one such group called *Krakowska Vesele*. They dressed up in peasant clothing and carried a tree decorated with little bells. They would sing and dance and put on little Purim-plays. Yankel the Water-carrier would make the rounds with his whole family. He carried a straw-figure wearing a red dress. Some of them beat on drums, others carried a lulav-and-esrog and shouted, "Bless the esrog and give money!"

In addition to the *hadorim* there was a general school that we called "*Shkole*," to which Jewish parents sent their girls. Not all the girls were admitted; only those whose parents owned their own homes or a business and paid taxes. There were well-to-do Jews, however, who "signed for" poor girls so they could attend the general school. There were also private tutors who went to the homes of children and "gave lessons." In the larger *hadorim* the teachers, in addition to the Hebrew studies, also taught arithmetic and Russian for an hour a day. One of these teachers was Moshe Lehrer, whose son Avreml Homentowski now lives in Brazil. Other private tutors were: Velvl Lehrer, Yehiel Zucker and David Ostrowiecki. There were also a few women tutors.

After Tisha B'Av, during which the entire shtetl mourned the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the atmosphere grew more solemn. The happy summer was ending, presaging the arrival of the difficult winter. People had to start preparing boots and warm clothing for themselves and their children; they had to put in supplies of kindling woods, potatoes, beets, cabbage and other things.

The real "days of awe," however, came with the month of Elul. Even the women started going to *shul* in the morning. Before the High Holy Days, Jews from the smaller towns

around Szydlowiec came into town, so they would have a place to worship. In the larger communities they would engage a cantor to lead the services.

Yom Kippur eve in Szydlowiec is beyond my powers of description. Everyone went to the cemetery to visit the graves of parents and family. People wept and screamed and begged the dead to help them pray for a good year. On both sides of the entrance to the cemetery stood beggars pleading for alms, as well as various charitable societies collecting for the needy.

Returning from the cemetery, people used to eat special meals. (It was a custom to eat kreplech). After the meal, people ran to the mikveh. Then, carrying big candles, they went to the synagogue for mincha services. I still remember seeing men lie down on the floor of the synagogue while one man went around whipping them with a cat-o-nine-tails, in order to help them atone for their sins. (This was called "*malkes*" — lashes.)

When the cantor chanted the Kol Nidre, the very heavens opened. He had to stop every once in a while because of the weeping and wailing of the women. Sometimes people fainted during the day of Yom Kippur and Avrom the *Royfe* had to be summoned, or even the doctor himself.

The synagogue had marvelous acoustics. The famous cantor Sirota, who once lead the services there, told us that he had never sung in a place where his voice resounded as it did in our synagogue.

Szydlowiec itself produced a few excellent cantors. The last assistant-cantor in the Thlomatska Synagogue in Warsaw, Abraham Sherman, came from Szydlowiec. His father, Moshe Ziglarz, had owned a brickworks on the Radom Highway.

A BIT OF SHTETL HISTORY

by Shmuel Chustetski

Szydłowiec was always a typically provincial town, with no chance of developing into something bigger. Even in its past history Szydłowiec never played a significant economic or cultural role. A town like all other Polish towns, with short and narrow streets and many hunchbacked little houses, with a “synagogue street” and a unique Jewish cemetery. The streets, paved with big cobblestones and narrow sidewalks, are full of busy Jews of all ages in Hassidic clothing — with their “*yubitses* and *chalatn*,” with little Polish-Jewish hats on their closely shorn heads. The Jewish women, in their wigs and bonnets, careful not even to glance at the men, carry baskets filled with meat from the butcher-shops, or other kinds of products from the marketplace. The houses were crowded with large families. There were never enough days in the week. Nevertheless, people went on with the business of living, despite all the obstacles and inconveniences.

Not to be outdone, Szydłowiec also had its own “stock exchange” — in miniature — where Jewish merchants, brokers, or just plain idlers, hung around all day long. The restless eyes of the brokers kept looking for a gullible “Galitzianer.” The merchants competed with each other mercilessly; whoever was shrewder avoided bankruptcy. The weaker ones left the stage, bade farewell to their entrepreneurial careers and applied for relief.

The Szydłowiec population, with its Jewish majority — mainly handicraftsmen — did not always have enough work to provide everyone with a livelihood. This situation affected the working people in particular. Adverse conditions, with no prospects for improvement, spurred the young folks to try their luck in foreign countries, particularly in the New World. The Jewish youth of Szydłowiec invested their dreams and their

illusions in emigration, especially their need and desire to get out among other people.

The eternal religious antagonism between the Jews and Poles placed its stamp on their mutual relationships. Jews lived in a separate camp, with their old customs and traditions. But new ideas and freedom-winds did not bypass Szydlowiec either. They awakened the local young Jews from their lethargy. Witness the stormy and tumultuous year of 1905, when the Szydlowiec proletariat, Jews and Poles alike, took to the streets to fight against Tzarist oppression and for more human living conditions.

At that time the only Jewish workers party with a socialist outlook was the Bund, which had the sympathies and support of the poor people and the progressive section of the middle class.

Times change. Blind submission of the masses to the rich and powerful gradually disappeared. People protested against insulting the dignity of the poor. And the newly arising workers parties gave that protest their support.

THE JEWISH CEMETERY IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Mordecai V. Bernstein

The Szydlowiec Jewish cemetery had unusual luck — the new one, that is, because there were two cemeteries in the shtetl. Most of the gravestones on the new cemetery — which was a hundred years old — not only remained unharmed, but they even retained their inscriptions and their colors.

Not far from Szydlowiec were some famous quarries, from which the gravestones were dug. Furthermore, the local stonecutters were real artists, such as Shimele Chustetski and

his son, Mordecai Binsktok and his son Yankl, and Shimele Kaminosh.

Thousands of the gravestones remained intact, especially the polychrome stones, that is, those that are painted in various colors. The decorations on these gravestones are in red, silver, orange, black and ultramarine. Particularly rich and artistic are the ornaments and symbolic figures — fingers of Kohanim, pitchers of Levites, bookcases on the gravestones of scholars, as well as fallen trees. Also, figures of deer on the graves of men named Tsvi, and lions on those named Aryeh-Leyb.

Two young Polish artists, Lucino Krakowski and Jazek Antoni Zielinski, made casts of the Szydlowiec gravestones without harming or defacing the originals in any way. These reproductions became famous and popular, and in 1959 the artists exhibited 25 examples of Jewish gravestones from a community that had been wiped off the face of the earth.

Later, 50 of these “gravestones” were shipped to Israel, where a special exhibit was arranged in the Museum of Ethnography and Folklore in Tel Aviv. The museum published a catalog describing how the reproductions were made. It also contains a statement by the two artists, in Polish, about their technique and about some of the gravestones that were deliberately destroyed, especially the graves of rabbis. They conclude their account with these words:

“Our task was to demonstrate not only the beauty of the ornaments on the gravestones, but also their tragic defacement, a silent symbol of guilt-feeling . . .”

There was a time when Jews used to visit the graves of their parents and relatives during the month of Elul. Now this no longer happens. The communities themselves were destroyed. Remaining are only symbolic “visits”, when the graves come to us . .

There is one exception — the Szydlowiec cemetery, which

sent its fifty “fallen trees, priestly hands and Levite pitchers,”
echoes of an obliterated thousand-year-old Jewish life — to
Israel.

BETWEEN TWO WORLD WARS

SZYDLOWIEC — A CITY OF LABOR

by Jacob Pomerantz

Szydlowiec had not only many Jewish scholars but also many religious societies such as a *Chevre Mishnayes*, a *Chevre Gemorah*, and *Chevre Tehillim*, as well as a *Chevre Shomrey Shabbos*, whose function was to make the rounds Friday afternoons and remind people to close their shops and stands and light the candles. (Mostly this was done by Anshl Hittelmacher or his father-in-law, Abram Moshe Weinberg.) There was one society that studied Talmud with the head of one of the yeshivas. In the Little Bes Medresh, the dayan Elezar studied Bible and Rashi with a group every Shabbos afternoon after the main meal.

The extent to which Szydlowiec was known for its political, cultural and professional activity can be seen from the fact that the central offices in Warsaw sent us such party leaders as Yizhak Greenbaum, Dr. Joshua Thon, Zerubavel, Erlich, Chmurner.

A city of labor and commerce, Szydlowiec was famous throughout the country for its shoe and leather craftsmanship. It had 13-14 mechanized tanneries, plus several small shops where the work was done by hand. It had some 30 shoe factories and 35 or 40 quilt-making shops. There were still about two dozen custom-made shoe shops.

There were about 35 tailor shops that made cheap trousers and blouses that they sold to the peasants. Wintertime on the coldest days, they would get up at 2-3 o'clock in the morning and not return until midnight. There were many orchard-keepers in Szydlowiec. Most of them were also tailors and shoemakers. During the winter they worked at their trade; summertime they tended their orchards. They and their

families lived a very hard life, sleeping in the field-huts, cooking their meals on field-stoves like the Gypsies, exposed to the rains and storms and the stones thrown at them by the peasant boys.

Szydlowiec had Jewish carpenters, construction workers, blacksmiths, wheelrights, mechanics, and so on. Ninety percent of the Jews in Szydlowiec worked hard and long to earn their living, but at one time or another, half of them didn't have enough to eat or were short of money for their Sabbath meal.

SZYDLOWIEC'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

by Simcha-Bunim Blander

One of the interesting types in Szydlowiec was Noah Chaims, a nephew of the "Yehuda Hakodesh." He was completely divorced from wordly things. People called him a Lamed-Vovnik. All day long he wore his tefillin. He lived in dire poverty. If it hadn't been for Yitzhak Eisenberg, who supported him, he would have died of starvation. Day and night he studied the holy books with his son Chaim. The room where they 'learned' looked like a grave. It was curtained off by a bed sheet, and whoever brought them food left it outside the curtain. Even on the coldest days Reb Noah never failed to go to the mikveh.

There were other pious Jews, who were not content just to study themselves but who also concerned themselves with other religious needs of the community.

There were about 20 *hedorim* in town. In the 1930s a yeshiva was opened, with Nisn from Nowaredok as director. His father-in-law Eliezer also taught there.

The Talmud Torah was administered by a committee consisting of Chaim Rosenberg, Chaim-Hersh Blander, Yankl Wigdorowicz and Eliyohu-Meir Broness, who was the director. The enrollment was about 150 students. There were six teachers: Israel Neiman, Yitzhok Rosenzweig, Jacob Moshe Abramowicz, Chaim Tovyeh, Shimon Bitter and Moshe Govichever. The Talmud Torah was later combined with the yeshiva.

The Mizrakhi organization was headed by Rakhmiel Chaim Blizinski, Aaron Lieberman, Aaron Blumenfeld, Shlomele Eisenberg and Hersh-Nakhman Blatman.

Active in HaPoel HaMizrakhi were Moshe David Shchenshlive, Nota Zucker and Moshe Blander.

There was a Mizrakhi *hakhshara* whose members worked mainly in the sawmill. Mizrakhi also had a Yavneh school.

In the Kehillah, Mizrakhi had three representatives, Agudah had three, the Bund had two. Representing the Agudah were Moshe Citron, Shlomo Neiberg and one other whose name I can't remember.

Despite the conflicts between the various religious shadings, Szydlowiec had a dynamic religious life.

JEWS IN THE SZYDLOWIEC CITY COUNCIL

by Abraham Finkler (Toronto)

The Poles used to call our town *Zhidlowiec* because Jews were the majority of the population there. The district head in Radom (his name was Kirkles, probably a German from Lithuania) used to call it "*Judenstadt*." Jewish participation in the city administration, however, was always minimal. Before the elections, Levinski, the *starosta* (district governor) from

Kinsk would pay us a "friendly visit." He would call together the Jewish community leaders and explain to them that, for the sake of maintaining peace, the Jews should demonstrate their good will to their Christian neighbors by drawing up a joint slate to elect the mayor. After a bargaining session over how many councilmen each side should have, it always ended up with a majority of non-Jews.

There were also instances when the *starosta* was unhappy with the selection of a local man for Mayor and wanted to put in one of his own people. Months in advance he would pay us a visit, call together the Jewish representatives and explain to them that it would profit the town a great deal to elect such a person. The Jews understood what he meant and the elections ended up as *he* wished . . .

For a long time the same Jewish councilmen were elected to office in Szydlowiec: Moshe citron, senior councilman; Abraham Blicher and Shabbatai Lacks, from the Bund; Shlomo Neiberg, from Agudah and Leybush Shchenshlive, independent. They were almost like "professional" councilmen. Later, with new winds blowing, there was a feeling among the younger Jews that they should be represented by a younger person, and Joseph Tenenbaum was also elected.

In the years prior to the war the authorities put a lot of pressure on the population to beautify the cities and towns. Urbanization became almost an obsession with them. And it all fell on the heads of the Jews.

A regulation was passed, for example, that petty traders who sold their wares from stands in the marketplace had to pay a daily 2-zloty tax to the city. This aroused a great protests — it was practically their daily profit. Chayele Rosenberg (now Gutman, lives in Toronto), who owned a newspaper kiosk, called together all the interested people and appealed to the Kehillah representatives to do everything possible to get the

law rescinded. A large delegation, consisting of Kehillah representatives and councilmen, headed by the rabbi, went directly to the county board and after long negotiations, managed to have the law revoked.

But it wasn't long before a new decree was promulgated: All the *hedorim* were ordered closed, for the following reasons: (1) The *melamdim* (teachers) had no teaching certificates; (2) the places were not suitable for classrooms; (3) the *melamdim* had not had medical examinations; (4) the rooms were not properly ventilated, and they were large enough for only 4-5 pupils, whereas they were now holding 30-40.

Again there was a protest, even louder than before, because this was an affront to religious feelings, and what it would have meant to Jews to close down their schools needs no elaboration here. The *starosta* was flooded with complaints. He turned them over to the county board of education in Kinsk, which consisted of the directors of the existing state schools, the county physician, the Catholic Bishop of Kinsk, several city council representatives and the county school inspector. The *starosta* was Chairman. The only Jewish representative on the board was Abraham Flinker, who reported on the whole matter and tried to put it in the proper perspective. The board finally decided to turn the matter back to the City Commission in Szydlowiec that would be set up for this purpose.

The matter was settled in the following way. The *melamdim* had to be examined by the county physician in Kinsk; they had to be photographed bareheaded, they had to whitewash the walls in their *hedorim*, install metal ventilators in the windows, and hang portraits of Josef Pilsudski and President Moscicki on the wall, along with a license issued and signed by the County Board of Education. There was to be a maximum number of 8-10 children in the room at any time. That's what it said on the wall, but in actual practice the number of children remained the same as it was before . . .

MELAMDIM, HEDORIM, SCHOOLS

by Isaac Milstein

Reb Hershl, the oldest *melamed* in Szydlowiec, was seventy when I attended his heder. He lived with his family in a room next to the heder. He started from *aleph-beys* and worked his way up to the Five Books of Moses (*khumesht*). We called him "The Pincher" because he seemed to enjoy pinching his pupils.

Yeshaye Zlatovicz, whom we called Yeshaya Hoiker (hunchback), was the exception among the *melamdim* because he was always neat and clean, you might say even dressed up. In his vest pocket he wore a silver watch on a silver chain. Moreover, he read newspapers — which was most unusual for those times in his circles.

Mordecai Kotsker used to terrorize the boys in his heder. A mean-spirited man, he would beat them unmercifully. The boys used to fight back against such *melamdim* by giving them nicknames that stuck to them for the rest of their lives. As bad a person as Mordecai Kotsker was, that's how good he was as a cantor. It was a joy to listen to him sing.

The Talmud Torah in Szydlowiec, a large building with four big rooms on the first floor and two on the second, was administered by a committee. The school was divided into four classes. Over the entrance to the building was a large sign reading: EDUCATE THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR, FOR FROM THEM WILL COME FORTH TORAH.

Great emphasis was placed on good manners. Whenever any member of the Administration Committee entered a classroom, all the children would greet him with a welcoming *borukh-habo*.

Yisroel Neiman introduced new methods of discipline. He never struck a child. He made them feel their guilt in other ways. I remember when one of the boys persuaded a classmate

to steal something. Neiman made them both stand in the room for a couple of hours, each one wearing a sign. One sign read: "I Stole." The other: "I Instigated Him."

In addition to Hebrew, we were also taught to read and write Yiddish and Polish; also arithmetic. Several times a week, Israel Zucker taught those subjects.

There were no special places in our shtetl where children could play. We had to find our own places to play hide-and-seek, tag, or a game called "Burned Kasha" (for which we needed four trees). That was during the summer. Wintertime, especially on Shabbos afternoons, we would find a corner in the Big Bes-Medresh (where the grownups were reading Psalms) or in the Small Bes-Medresh (where old Hersh Motte was translating the Torah portion of the week for the "common folk.")

When you "graduated" from heder you had three alternatives: to learn a trade (which 75% of the children did, though some of them continued their education with private tutors); second, to enter the yeshiva (most pious parents sent their boys there); third, to enroll in a Polish school, of which there were two, one for boys and one for girls. The higher the class, the fewer Jews there were.

All the teachers were Christians. Once there was one named Unger, but he turned out to be an apostate. Only the teacher of religion was Jewish — our own Rabbi Chaim Sholem Yekutiel Rabinowicz. He taught us from a bible translated into Polish, and his class was very enjoyable. His Polish was perfect. Later, Abraham Finkler took over his post as teacher of religion.

Most of the students in the Polish schools were girls. The Jewish parents did not want their children to spend 4-5 hours a day in a Christian school, so they would engage a private tutor to come to their homes and teach the general subjects. Actually it usually turned out to be a class, anyway. For example, in our house there were my two brothers and myself and several of

the neighbors' children — about 8-10 children altogether. We had a five-year program, then the Director of the Polish school would give us an examination. Those who passed received a diploma equivalent to completing the courses in the state school.

CUSTOMS AND NOSTRUMS

by Devorah Rosenzweig-Blander

Like every other city and town in Poland, our Szydlowiec also had its customs. Some of them I remember.

Whenever a funeral procession passed by, Jews shut their doors and windows, even their shops.

When a bridegroom and his guests came into Szydlowiec from another town, they would be driven through the streets three times round, in the same carriage they came in.

Weddings would take place usually in the synagogue yard. The neighbors around the synagogue would place lamps or candles along the way to the synagogue. After the ceremony, the grandmother of the groom or bride would dance up to the couple and sing out: "*Chosn, do hostu a kuchen, zolst nit darfn mer ken kalleh zuchen.*" (Groom, here's a cookie, so you won't have to look for a bride any longer.)

In the home of a woman who has just given birth, they hung a sheet around the bed. On the doors and windows they hung amulets and inscriptions to drive away the evil spirits.

To cure a swelling or inflammation on the face or other parts of the body, they would place around the patient's bed a sheet of heavy paper on which the following was written in Latin letters with straws from a broom: PILA RUZA AFFA POSTA. Not everyone was empowered to write such an inscription — only Yehiil Abish Blander or Zelik Soyfer.

Anyone, however, was permitted to drive away the Evil

Eye. We learned that in heder as kids. One method was this: Take the ember of a burnt piece of wood and put in into water. If it sinks, the Evil Eye will be difficult to avoid. This method was called "Extinguishing the Evil Eye."

We had two *badkhonim* in Szydlowiec. Yudele Vignanski was the very pious one, but he could entertain the guests and sing to the bride. Yitzhok Moyshe Rafalowicz the Drummer was the more worldly one, with the more modern style.

One of the tastiest dishes in our town was called *tatishane* — brown flour. The flour was dissolved in water. This was spooned into small tin trays and baked in the oven. It was delicious.

Our borsht was different, but very simple to prepare. In a big pot of water we put some bran. We let this stand until it turned sour. Then it was sold. You could make it to taste — with sorrel or with the leaves of new beets or with cabbage or with garlic (this was called *knobelborsht*). Several families made a living out of selling this. The borsht-makers were Frumet, Yankel, Sarah Elka and Freyda.

Griskelech were also baked with brown flour, mixed with wheat flour and sugared on top. These were almost as big as a roll. The larger ones we called *griskes*. You could buy them in any bakery in Szydlowiec.

BLOOD LIBEL IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Hershl Kriss

This happened a few years before the destruction of our shtetl.

It was a few weeks before Pesach. Early one Shabbos morning a rumor raced through the town that a city official named Gomulczinski had disappeared.

His two friends, Geniek Schlessinger and Pajonk said that the Jews had probably lured him into a trap and killed him, so

they could use his blood for making matzos for their holiday. The Christian population picked up this rumor and very soon there was a pogrom atmosphere in Szydlowiec. Schlessinger and Pajonk accused a Jewish baker of the crime. The Chief of Police and his deputy searched the bakery and arrested the baker. Panic spread among the Jews — what could be more dangerous than a blood libel?

Gomulczinski was a young Pole who lived with his mother and sister and worked in the office of the Mayor. He was known as a Polish patriot and a man of conscience who had been on good terms with the Jews. Schlessinger and Pajonk were spoiled ne'er-do-wells from wealthy families. Schlessinger was the worst of the pair. Pajonk was not as rich — his father was an organist. Both of them loved to flirt with Jewish girls.

The police soon began to suspect them of having had something to do with Gomulczinski's disappearance. The chief witness against them was the wife of Seta the carpenter. The windows of her home faced the yard of the Schlessinger's. She testified that several days earlier she had seen three men walk past her window, but that only two had come back. She had also noticed that Schlessinger was digging in his field, something he had never done before. The police searched Schlessinger's field and found the body of the missing Gomulczinski. The two suspects were tried and convicted of the murder.

“MENDEL TROTSKY”

by Sarah Zeller (Goldwasser)

My father Mendl came to Szydlowiec from Radom. There he married Esther, daughter of Nehemia Schneider. He was a shoemaker who worked hard at his trade from early morning to late afternoon and often far into the night. When there was work, he had to do as much as he could to make up for the lean times that he knew lay ahead. It was a life of hardship, but we

did have happy times. We loved each other and were devoted and close-knit family.

My father quickly acclimated himself. He became active in the leatherworkers union, which was then under the influence of the “linke” — the communists — as was usual at that time, especially in the new independent Poland. Mendl Goldwasser was the tone-setter and the advisor in all the conflicts that arose between the employers and the workers. Everyone listened to him. That’s why he was given the nickname “Mendl Trotsky” — a name that stuck with him until the end. Mendl was an idealist.

He loved the workers and helped them in hard times — which were frequent. Mendl often needed help himself, but his belief never wavered. Along with his comrades, he believed that help could come only from the East. He perished in Treblinka with most of the Jews from Szydlowiec.

My mother was a wonderful woman who suffered hardship as a result of my father’s political and union activities. Her greatest anxiety was that he would be taken away by the police and never return. But he always came home after the police interrogations. The summers, the winters, the periods of labor unrest and strikes, all this meant hard times — no work, no money. Regardless of our own circumstances, however, my father, as president of the local union, always had a helping hand for his union brothers in need. He was well read in Yiddish books books and newspapers.

On July 15, 1942 I was taken to the Skarzysko Hassag labor camp, where we worked in a large munitions factory. In July 1944 we were transported to Czenstochowa along with the entire factory.

As the only survivor of my whole family, it has fallen to me to leave a remembrance of them here. It was only through the love and devotion of my husband that I was able to survive the terrible trauma and rebuild my shattered spirit.

THEATER, FILM AND SZYDLOWIEC ARTISTS

by Isaac Milstein

I'll begin with the dramatic circle which was part of my trade union. It was general knowledge that they were preparing a theater production, but no one knew what it was or when it would take place. One day my brother's friend, Shlomo Zuckergut, asked me to come to a rehearsal, because they needed someone to make the posters and the stage decorations. I accepted the invitation with pleasure, because I've always loved art and the theater.

They were rehearsing Goldfadn's *Bobe Yakhne* (also called *Di Kishef-makherin*, The Witch.) Lazer Sharfer was the director. Later they called him "Hotsmakh", after his role in the play — he was so well suited to that role that the name stuck to him. **By trade he was a cake baker** — the rehearsals actually took place in his bakery. The other players were: Meir Sternshas, Goldele Ungerovitch (a pretty girl with a fine voice), Leah Schwartzfing, Nota Stern (prompter), Shlome Zuckergut, Shmuel Rosenzweig, Motl Verzbniker, Reyzl Chamentowski, Chaya Dina Saltzman, Leybl Wasserstein. There were a lot of songs in the play; the music was played by the brothers Isaac and Aaron Geiger.

The play was presented on a Saturday evening in January 1930. The hall was packed. The play was so well received that it was performed again a couple of weeks later. The songs were afterward sung in all the workshops in town.

After "The Witch" they began rehearsing Jacob Gordin's "God, Man and Devil," a very difficult drama for amateurs. This play was performed with a new director, Moshe Shia Zuckerman. New actors came forward. Leading roles were taken by Yekutiel Horowitz and Reyzl Birenblum. Also, Rivka

Wistonshka, Chaya Fuchs, Masha Silberstein and Nota Stern. Leybush Yosl Rosenbloom became the prompter. Also in the cast were Shmuel Rosenzweig, Leybe Wasserstein and myself.

The evening of the presentation was like a festive holiday. The house was sold out and the play was a great success.

Later, in addition to plays, we did revues with song and dance. We also did "The Dybbuk" and "The Fruits of War."

A year before the war, Yeheskehl Lichtiger, a well known artist, managed to produce "A Mother's Heart." He also organized a chorus which gave some concerts. This was during the last days before the outbreak of the war, when the curtain came down forever on the theater and its players.

The movie theater in Szydlowiec was built right after the first World War. Chaya Glickes, the former wife of Chayim Osher Shotland, was the manager. She brought in some very good films. Since they were silent films, a violinist always accompanied the showing. Sometimes it was Akiba Mendelsohn and sometimes one of the Geiger brothers. If it was a religious film, like "The Ten Commandments," special showings were arranged for the school children (one of whom was me). I remember marveling at the way they had brought Mt. Sinai to Szydlowiec . . .

With the arrival of sound movies, the theater was taken over by a man named Golach, a non-Jew. The last owners were a couple named Katz.

One of our best artists was leybush Chustetski. His father, Shimele, was a house painter and also did inscriptions on gravestones, but could barely earn a living.

When the *bes-medresh* was rebuilt they put in a new Torah Ark. The artist who did the wood-carvings was Leybush Shcherbutski, a Master at his craft.

When Nota Eisenberg built his magnificent house, the finest in the city, the landscapes on the walls were done by Leybush Chustetski and his father Shimele. **Here** Leybush won

recognition for his artistic ability. His painting on the creation of the Polish constitution and of Thaddeus Kosciuszko (who took part in the American Revolution) hung in the city hall. It was the fashion in those days to paint the four seasons of the year on the ceilings of wealthy homes. Leybush did this for the first time in the home of Chaim Rosenberg.

The youngest artist in our town was Yankele Saltzman, son of Abraham Abish the mechanic. The teacher in the Polish school had high hopes for him. He once painted a portrait of President Theodore Roosevelt from a newspaper photograph and it was very well received in the White House. He even made a deck of cards for himself — they were incredible! Before the war he studied in an art school in Warsaw. He was also a talented violinist. A musician from Lodz, who had somehow landed in Szydlowiec, gave him lessons gratis. The day before the deportation, Yankele escaped with his brother Moshe, carrying Aryan documents. That was the last time we ever saw him.

Yosl Silberstein and I, who both attended Yeshaye Melamed's heder, started by drawing pictures on the pages of *siddurim* and *chumoshim* — and were properly punished. Later, Yosl painted large portraits of Jabotinski and Theodore Herzl. Today he lives in Melbourne, Australia, where he has had several exhibits.

My cousin, Yankl Milstein, was also a gifted artist. When he and I were students in the Polish school, the teacher sent our drawings to an exhibit in Kinsk. Today Yankl is an artist in Ramat Gan in Israel.

Moshe Chaim Vignanski, the son of Yidele Badkhen, was also an artist. Every year before Shevuot he would make paper flowers for himself. The custom was to hang pictures in the windows of your home — pictures of fortresses, of soldiers, of historic personalities. Moshe Chaim painted his own pictures and hung them in his windows. They were greatly admired by

the townspeople. Moshe Chaim died in the camp at Jedlne, leaving a wife and children.

DOCTORS IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Reyzl Midlarski-Kwiatowski

As I remember my childhood, there was no doctor in Szydlowiec. Whenever anyone took sick they first tried all the old methods — cupping, castor oil, and similar remedies. If you sprained your wrist or your ankle you first ran to Lazer-Yoske, who was a “specialist” in putting such things right. Who was this Lazer-Yoske? He owned a two-wheel cart on which he delivered a variety of merchandise.

In case of a serious illness you called the “feldsher” — of whom we had three: Aaron the Healer (Fisher), Yeshaya the Healer (Moshenberg) and Avremele the Healer (Fisher). They could prescribe a medicine and, if necessary, apply cups or leeches. The feldshers also used to pull teeth for the peasants. At the door to each feldsher’s house hung three brass trays, tied to each other, and when a breeze blew, the tinkling of the metal could be heard far and wide. For the feldshers these trays were like the diploma that hangs in a doctor’s office.

In very serious cases, people would call the doctor in Radom.

For women in childbirth there were several midwives who had learned their “profession” through long years of experience. The most popular one was Ruzhe, who had brought most of the children in Szydlowiec into the world. She used to say she was the mother of thousands of children and she called each one “my child.” The writer of these lines is one of her children.

It was not until the 1930s that we got a professionally trained midwife in Szydlowiec. Both she and her daughter used to deliver the babies.

Actually we already had a hospital in Szydlowiec in those days. But strangely enough, it was empty most of the time. Older people told us that during the first World War the hospital functioned under the guidance of Rivka Zucker, who was a nurse.

Early in the 1920s there was a change for the better when Dr. Nikolski settled in Szydlowiec. He was immediately appointed the town physician and he never lacked for patients.

Several years later Dr. Tadanyer came to Szydlowiec. A recent graduate, handsome and gentle, he soon ingratiated himself with everyone in town.

As the population increased, two doctors were not enough, so a feldsher "migrated" from Lodz — his name was Niechtshisky. He had acquired a great deal of experience from working in hospitals and he proved to be a big help to the people, especially for younger children. Later, Leybush Dimont became our third doctor. His father, Joel, was very prominent in Szydlowiec, a "modern" man with the reputation of being a liberal. He sent his son to France to study medicine, and when Leybush came back a full-fledged doctor, the whole town shared in the glory. It was no small thing.

None of the doctors charged exorbitant fees, but Dr. Dimont never even asked for money. If a patient was too poor to pay, that was all right with him too. Often, in such cases, he would even supply the medicine free.

With the outbreak of World War II Dr. Dimont remained practically the only doctor for a while, until several Jewish doctors — refugees from Krakow — came to Szydlowiec. They all worked beyond the limits of their strength in the hospital that was set up by order of the Gestapo. In those bitter times Dr. Dimont managed to obtain needed medicines from Paris,

which had not yet been occupied by the Germans. He had contacts there with a few people from Szydlowiec — the Kwiatowskis and his own brother-in-law Jacob Katz. Dr. Dimont was killed by the Nazis. His wife, Leah (Katz) Dimont miraculously escaped with her son and they are now living in Paris.

DENTISTS IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Elka Goldberg Silberman

For many years Szydlowiec had no dentist. If you had a toothache you were in trouble. Avremele the Healer could only pull teeth, not fix them . . .

The richer folks went to Radom or Warsaw to get their teeth fixed, but what could the poor people do? So toothaches were very prevalent in our town, and this gave rise to many anecdotes and curses.

The situation improved when a dentist named Kachanowski came from Warsaw and opened an office in Szydlowiec.

Working people and young people had their teeth taken care of in the dispensary, where treatment was free or at very low cost. For a while we had a woman dentist, the daughter of a Polish teacher, but she didn't stay long.

In the 1930s a dentist named Mechner settled in our shtetl, but he was more a technician than a dentist. He had a good assistant, a woman named Kwiatkowska, who helped many patients, especially the young people.

In the least years before the war, the dentist Tobenhaus and his wife came to Szydlowiec. They were middle-aged and so assimilated that they didn't even consider themselves Jews, but when the Nazis came with their "deportations" he went into the trains along with all the other Jews. Mrs. Tobenhaus was caught in a hiding-place in their building and shot.

SZYDLOWIEC YOUTH

by Pearl Teichman

Szydlowiec, with its age-old way of life and its Jewish homes with their deeply rooted traditions, was indelibly engraved upon our young hearts. But when we grew a little older, the atmosphere in the home became oppressive. New dreams filled our hearts and awakened a striving to get out into the bigger world. The young people of my generation lived through this period of sturm-and-drang that followed World War I. The world-shaking events going on around us dragged us into their raging stream and we struggled to educate ourselves, as well as to bring a little light to the young Jews in the shtetl.

Here our paths collided with those of our parents. Even though we ourselves had no professional education, we took upon ourselves the work of opening schools supplementary to the heder, whose teaching methods no longer suited us. Naturally our parents were opposed to this. But we overcame all obstacles. (These schools were also open to children who had no opportunity of attending the Polish state schools.)

THE MILL

by Frieda Kurlender-Kuplik

My grandfather, Itzik Kurlender, owned a big mill which he had built himself. The mill employed about 25 people who worked in three shifts. The mill served the entire area.

The head miller was Meir Monk.

Sarah Anshels, my other grandfather's wife, was the real breadwinner. My grandfather Anshel studied Torah all day and was the right hand of Szydlowiec's rabbi, Chaim Rabinowicz. Sarah was a very charitable woman, always helping out the *hakhnoses kallah* society, the synagogue, the cemetery, etc.

After my grandfather Itzik died, the mill was managed by my father, Hershl, and Israel Warshafsky, one of the most prominent men in Szydlowiec.

A MATTER OF SPIRITS

by Yankl Silberman

This happened during the time when shopkeepers in Szydlowiec used to order their goods through a broker who had contacts with large wholesale firms in other cities, notably Warsaw and Lodz. These brokers would hire wagon-drivers who would start out early Sunday morning, taking along also various Szydlowiec products such as whetstones for scythes, soft leather for shoes and boots, and other such things.

A trip like this, in which merchants and passengers on special business would also go along, used to take almost a week. If everything went smoothly, they would return on Friday. The wagon drivers had hardly enough time to eat or sleep. They would grab something in an inn and drive further. All they could think of was to get back early enough on Friday so they could unload the merchandise for the merchants who had ordered it, then go to the bath-house and get a good wash, then greet the Sabbath in the synagogue and have an oneg-Shabbos for the coming week.

This is how it was with Simchele Baalagole. On one such Friday evening, when he came into the synagogue, he sat down on a bench near the anteroom and *davened mincha*. When the cantor started singing the *L'cho-dodi*, Simchele fell fast asleep. The cantor finished the service, the shammas said the kiddush, the synagogue emptied out, and the shammas, being the last one out, locked the door behind him. The candles burned down and went out.

Simchele woke up and found himself alone in the dark synagogue, but he was not a man who scares easy. He went

over to the window in the anteroom which looked out into the yard and began to bang on it and call for help. Suddenly he noticed that Sholem Bushkevich, who lived near the synagogue, was coming into the yard to fetch some water from the well. He gathered up all his strength and started yelling: "Sholem! Sholem!" Bushkevich, hearing his name being called from the dark synagogue, was so frightened that he began screaming "Spirits! Evil spirits" and fainted dead away.

Meanwhile, Sholem's family had become concerned and gone out to see what happened to their father. They found him lying on the ground in the yard. Simcheleh's children too had come out to look for *their* father. Finally they put the story together and went to get the key from the shammes.

The next morning the whole town was buzzing with the news: Last night, evil spirits had been hiding in the synagogue and calling to anyone who passed by — by name . . .

THE DEATH OF TWO BOYS

by Leybush Glass, י"ב

This happened on a bright summer day.

Leybush and Moyshe, the children of Israel and Leah Radolnick, went out to the pond near the "castle," where people in Szydlowiec used to go to bathe. It was very early in the morning and no one else was there.

The two brothers went into the water. After a little while they sank beneath the surface. A woman who was washing clothes some distance away noticed this and began to scream. Members of the Kanovski family, who lived nearby, came running and leaped into the water with their clothes on. They found the two boys — but it was too late.

This terrible tragedy left the whole town shaken almost as much as the parents.

Yankl Radolnick, the older brother of the two boys, later fell on the battlefield in the war against the Nazis.

TRAGIC MEMORIES

by Majorek Rosenberg

Time heals, time consoles, time makes one forget — but memories of one's youth remain forever.

In the center of my memories is a group of friends who are now only shadows for me. Yet they are real. Friends like Shlomo Kleiman, Avigdor Shuster, Motek Milstein, Abramek Milstein, Shlomo Eisenberg, Yankl Eisenberg, Samek Redlich. These are names that live on in my thoughts. Samek was the first victim.

In order to attend the gymnazie, some of us had to get up at six o'clock in the morning, ride five kilometers on our bikes to the train station for our ultimate destination — either Radom or Skarzisk or Kielce. More than once we had incidents with anti-Semitic students who were riding the same route.

I remember our summer excursions to the pine forests near the village of Sodek, our swimming expeditions in the pond — and even the political discussions in my father's kiosk, where he sold newspapers.

Now there are only a handful of us left. And though we came from various circles of the community, we all have the same tragic memories of our past.

INSTITUTIONS AND PARTIES

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Saul and Hinda Zlotov

Most of the people who belonged to the General Zionist movement in Szydlowiec were from the middle-class. The Zionists had a fine library of Yiddish and Hebrew books located in the center of town, in the home of Yehiel Dimont. It attracted many readers.

Aside from matters having to do directly with Eretz Israel, they were also active in the elections to the Sejm, to the city council and to the Kehillah.

When the Balfour Declaration was issued, the Zionists organized a large open-air rally. People said that there had never been such a large demonstration in Szydlowiec, "before or since." In honor of the opening of the University of Jerusalem they called a meeting in the synagogue at which 2000 people were present.

For a few years their activities declined, but then the movement was strengthened by the founding of BETAR, which attracted many young middle-class people, who were tremendously impressed by the uniforms and the whole military attitude. One of their leaders was Abraham Finkler, a teacher of religion in the Polish school and secretary of the Kehillah. Their principal leader was Jacob David Blizinski.

BETAR and Brit Hachayil often arranged events, mostly dances, which attracted many young people. Their activity weakened the General Zionist movement and they even took over the administration of the library.

THE BUNDIST MOVEMENT IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Yankl Silberman

The Bundist organization in Szydlowiec had been active long before my time; it was already in existence in 1905, when people called Bundists "*achdutniks*" (unity) or "strikers." The social-political awakening in our town was strengthened even more by the creation of Independent Poland and by the Russian Revolution. With the establishment of Bolshevism in Russia a struggle began in Szydlowiec for hegemony in the ranks of the working-people and in the Bund itself. This period ended in 1924 when the police closed the trade union hall. Many workers were arrested and their leaders imprisoned.

By 1926 the Szydlowiec workers had recovered from this police persecution. Their leaders had been released and with their return, the Bundist activity gradually revived. In the fall of 1926 Yosl Stark came from Lodz, where he had belonged to the *Yugntbund-Zukunft*, the Bund's youth organization. With his initiative, a Yugentbund was organized in Szydlowiec. An executive committee was formed, headed by Yosl Stark. Summertime we used to hold our meetings on the outskirts of the city. Wintertime we met every week in the homes of the older Bundists — Hershl Modzevyetski, Henech Blok, Benjamin Tenenbaum, Mendl Meyerfeld, Berl Glas.

The work of the entire Bundist movement was strengthened. Organizational Secretary was Bena Frishman, who was assisted by Aaron Shichter, Melech Tenenbaum, Eliezer Erlichman and a few others.

The Bund's political activity was very broad: elections to the city council, elections to the Sejm, May First demonstrations, cooperation with other organizations — the Polish Socialist Party, the trade unions, the Left Poale Zion. The Bund always participated in the city council elections. In 1920 the Bund already had 110 members and three councilmen;

later we had four councilmen plus two senior councilmen — Abraham Blicher and Shabbatai Lachs.

The Bundists worked closely with the local trade unions. The tannery workers, who had a well organized union, were affiliated with the Warsaw central labor council. The members were mostly Polish workers who were influenced by the Polish Socialist Party, plus a large number of Jewish workers. Aaron Shichter, a tannery worker, was one of the leaders and prominent in all the activities. Several strikes took place over the small earnings of the workers, which were being still further reduced by inflation.

In general the tannery workers were better paid than the other workers. They were almost the only ones who had steady jobs and who worked an 8-hour day. Among their leaders were: Abraham Ber Stark and Aaron Shichter, of the Bund, Joel Shichter of the Left Poale Zion, and a few men from the Socialist Party.

The leaders and activists of the organizations and trade unions acted out of the purest of ideals and a belief that they were helping to improve the conditions of people who earn their living by their labor.

Together with "Zukunft," the Bundists also organized an extensive cultural program for both the members of the organization and the Jewish community as a whole. Many of the young workers, who came from the poorest homes, were illiterate. The Bund taught them to read and write and to discuss elementary social and political problems. Former street urchins became class conscious workers.

The Bund organized a children's section called SKIF under the leadership of Bina Frishman and Yekutiell Gutman. The first members were Pearl Lachs, Esther Futerman, Elka Goldberg-Silberman, Hannah Rachale, Manya Stark Tenenbaum, Berl Bekermashin, Isaac Noro, Jocheved Rosenzweig, Shlomo Silberstein and Samuel Tenenbaum.

The Bund arranged lectures on Polish political problems as well as literary and Jewish problems, often with speakers from the Bundist central office in Warsaw.

A sports club known as "Morningstar" was organized in SKIF with the help of Bundists in Radom, who gave us advice and funds. We were able to recruit a good number of capable young people who organized a soccer team that included the Fishlevich brothers, Berl Green, Moshe Ber Moro, Isaac Moro and others. They played many matches that drew large crowds. Our games with non-Jewish clubs sometimes ended in fist-fights. We also organized a ping-pong team.

The executive committee of Morningstar consisted of Aaron Shichter, Itche Midlarski, David Shchenshlive, Shmuel Tenenbaum, Leybl Stark and David Zusman.

One of the first things the Bund did was to open a library. The library committee arranged discussions with readers, as well as "kestl" evenings. For a week before the event they hung up a box (*kestl*) into which people could drop written questions. At the "Kestl evening" the questions were answered by the library committee.

Part of the cultural activities was a dramatic section that put on plays. I remember some of these plays: *The Seven Who Were Hanged* (Andreyev), *Hertzele Meyuches* (Gordin), *The Blind Painter*, *The Jewish Heart* (Latiner), *The Wild-Man* (Gordin), *The Two Kuni-lemels* and "The Singer of Warsaw," directed by A. Veislitz. They also presented one-act plays with Israel Freedman, Henech Bok, Chava Katz and Chayelet Gutman.

I should also mention those who were not actors but who helped stage the productions: Mendl Mayerfeld (decorations), Hershl Kaufman and Yekutiell Gutman (technicians), Yudel Midlarski (decorations and posters).

The dramatic groups of the Bund and other parties were important financially and culturally. Both the players and the

audiences derived a great deal of artistic pleasure from the performances.

While writing these reminiscences I could see before my eyes all those wonderful people who hoped and believed that a "better world" was coming. May these few lines be a sad memorial to those vibrant young lives that were so brutally brought to an end.

BETAR and BRIT-HACHAYIL

by Yosel Silberstein

Betar was organized in Szydlowiec in 1930. Joining Betar were mostly girls who were graduates of the Polish school as well as of the Hebrew *Bet-Sefer Mizrachi*, directed by Yerakhmiel Haim Blizinski, where they had received a national Jewish education in the Hebrew language. Betar's Jewish state idea had a great appeal for them.

It was not easy to join Betar. First you needed written recommendations from several Betar members. Then you had to go through a long examination. They wanted to be certain that their members were ready to help spread the message of Betar and be a good example themselves of its ideals. Almost every evening there were lectures, discussions, Hebrew classes, Jewish and Zionist history classes. Israel Ferenbug gave scout training. They also ran Hebrew classes for beginners. Every week there was a "living newspaper" program, as well as cultural discussions and entertainment.

In 1933 *Brit-Hachayil* was organized, headed by Abraham Finkler. This organization consisted of Jewish reservists who had finished their service in the Polish army. Many Jewish war veterans joined this group. Their activities were conducted in the Betar meeting hall. There were classes in Zionist history, but their main activity was military training preparatory to joining the Jewish Legion.

One day five uniformed officers drove into Szydlowiec in an open automobile, painted blue and white with the menorah of *Brit-Hachayil* on both sides of the vehicle. They stayed in our town for an entire day, on their way to Eretz Israel. Their visit made a tremendous impression on the Jews of Szydlowiec.

LEFT AND RIGHT POALE ZION

by J. Silberman

The Left Poale Zion had a well functioning, active organization with a good number of young people. They used to bring in well known lecturers such as Zerubavel, Leyb Malach, Joel Mastbaum and Beinish Silberstein.

The Right Poale Zion did not have their own organization until the late 1930s, when a youth group was formed. They were helped by the fact that groups of halutzim came to Szydlowiec to stay at the *hachsharah* kibbutz supported by the well known Zionist H. Pinkert. In this *hachsharah* they carried on an intensive cultural program which influenced other Zionist youth in the town. Eventually some of them emigrated to Eretz Israel.

THE MIZRACHI PARTY

by Malke Rosenzweig-Silberman

Mizrachi had a fine organization, though not a very large one. Many friends and sympathizers helped the Mizrachi members carry out their activities. Their greatest shortcoming was that they did not have a youth organization.

They were represented in the Kehillah and participated in both communal and general elections.

One of their most important activities was around the Mizrachi school, where they taught Hebrew, grammar, Bible and Talmud in a more modern way than in the usual

hedarim. In the Talmud Torah the pupils of their school would arrange Hanuka and Purim programs. Lag B'Omer they would march to the Sodek Forest. Because of their higher tuition, only children of the more well-to-do families could afford to attend their school.

THE BIKUR HOLIM

by Abraham Finkler

Up until 1930 there was a *Bikur Holim* in Szydlowiec, but unfortunately it was turned into a private venture by several Orthodox Jews and its activity became practically nil.

A group of community leaders then proposed that the institution be reorganized by inviting people from all sections of the Jewish community to a general meeting at which a decision would be made at this matter.

At the meeting a presidium was elected which immediately issued a statement to the Jewish population of Szydlowiec announcing that the *Bikur Holim* would now be a non-party philanthropic institution to help the entire Jewish community. The presidium also arranged with the two Jewish physicians in Szydlowiec, Dr. Tadanier and Dr. Dimont, that needy patients would be treated gratis. They also arranged with the town apothecary, Kowalski, and with the owner of the pharmaceutical warehouse, Edward Goldzamd, to fill prescriptions stamped by the *Bikur Holim* at no charge.

The presidium also proposed the opening of an electro-medical clinic in the near future with quartz lamps, sun-lamps and ultra-violet equipment.

It did not take long before the apparatus of the *Bikur Holim* Society was in full swing. David Ostrowski was an intelligent and energetic manager who influenced others to throw themselves enthusiastically into the work. Other members of the presidium helped him a great deal. The

composition of the presidium changed from time to time, but the institution continued to function along well planned lines.

Medical instruction took place at the movie theater. These lectures were always well attended, even by the better educated Poles of Szydlowiec, and were therefore conducted in the Polish language. The chairman was Abraham Finkler. Speakers were Dr. Tadanier, Dr. Dimont and two other physicians from Skarzysk.

As soon as the treasury of the Bikur Holim received its first funds the presidium decided to purchase all the necessary equipment for the electro-medical clinic. They delegated A. Finkler to go to Warsaw and, with the help of TOZ and other philanthropic institutions, bought the required instruments. They rented two rooms in Hershl Vester's house and opened the clinic, which also served non-Jewish patients at minimal charge, because this was the only medical institution of its kind in Szydlowiec.

The *Bikur Holim* continued to function until the Nazi Destruction.

LIFE IN SZYDLOWIEC BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST

(A SUMMARY)

by B. KAGAN

Christians used to call Szydlowiec "Zhidloviets" ["Zhid" in Polish means "Jew"], and the Radom district commander called the shtetl "Judenstadt," because Christians comprised barely a fifth of the shtetl's population.

The history of the Jews of Szydlowiec can be divided into two periods: before the First World War and after it.

Until the First World War, the Jewish way of life in Szydlowiec was largely a traditional one. The atmosphere of

the community was predominately religious. Szydlowiec was a Hasidic shtetl and Hasidim played there the leading role.

Szydlowiec had its own Hasidic dynasty, which had an influence both on Szydlowiec Hasidim and on Hasidim in neighboring towns. The source of this dynasty was "HaYud HaKodesh" ["The Holy Jew"] of Pshische. It began with his son, Rebbe Nathan-Dovid, and extended to the last Rabbi and Rebbe in Szydlowiec, Reb Chaim Yekutiel Rabinowitz.

The most famous Rabbi in Szydlowiec was the Gaon Reb Meir Eisenshtadt, who later served as Rabbi in important Jewish communities.

Generations came and went, but the face of Jewish Szydlowiec changed only slightly. During the events of 1905, Jewish community life in the shtetl roused itself. Jewish young people were drawn into the revolutionary current. Strikes began — this was something which had previously been unknown. A few years later, in 1910-1911, a secret library was established, which helped bring new spirit into the shtetl.

But these were only small beginnings — a prelude to the great changes which would take place in Jewish life after the First World War, in the years of Polish independence. The greatly expanded and far-reaching activities of the Jewish political parties — the various Zionist organizations, the "Bund," and the Jewish Communists — left their mark more and more on local Jewish life. The battle for power and position which was being waged found expression when the time came to elect representatives to the Sejm, the municipality, the Kehilah, or to the Zionists Congresses. All this had its effect on the youth and on the entire local Jewish way of life.

The religious sector also did not sleep. It fought hard to keep its old position of power, particularly in the field of Jewish education. There was a large number of Chadorim in the period of Polish independence, and the Talmud-Torah

played a larger role. In the battle against the new Jewish secular schools, a Bes-Yaakov School was established for girls, and a "Yavneh" School for boys.

The economic situation of the Jews in Szydlowiec was not a lofty one, but neither was it very severe. Of course, there were more than a few poor people, and the growing generation of Jewish young people had great difficulties finding work. Many of them sought an alternative in emigration. But the special economic structure of the shtetl was such that it somewhat eased the local Jewish economic situation.

It was primarily the leather industry which was the vital nerve of Jewish life in Szydlowiec. A network of large and small tanneries was spread over the shtetl. Finished leather was sent out over all of Russia, and the number of ready-made exported shoes manufactured in Szydlowiec in a season amounted to about ten thousand pairs. What this meant for a small shtetl is easy to understand. To the list of Jewish small industries should also be added iron foundries and stone quarries.

The need for loans was also great, and here the two banks, "Bank Ludowy" and "Bank Kupiecki" assisted. The needier Jews obtained assistance from the treasury of the Gemiles Chasodim [the community loan society, offering interest-free loans], which was strengthened by funds from American "landslayt."

In general, Szydlowiec was a shtetl of Jewish workers and artisans, and this influenced the social patterns of local Jewish life. The various Jewish political parties developed a vigorous cultural life; their cultural activities were attended not only by their members, but by many Jews of the shtetl. Well-known leaders from Warsaw and abroad often lectured in Szydlowiec, and this acquainted the local Jews not only with political problems, but also with Jewish spiritual matters.

There were several dramatic clubs, which from time to time performed for the general public. Such theatrical

performances were always a holiday for the Jews of Szydlowiec.

The Jewish libraries in the shtetl and the Yiddish press of Warsaw helped greatly in the spiritual development of Jewish youth. In the time of Polish independence, many Jewish children — mostly girls — attended the local “Shkola Povshechna,” and a number of children attended out-of-town gymnasiums [schools comparable to high school and junior college].

In Szydlowiec there were no pogroms. Inasmuch as Szydlowiec had a majority of Jews, and since the worker and artisan element was a large one, Gentiles were rebuffed when they tried to harass Jews. There was an incident when peasants from the neighboring area agreed on a day and prepared to attack the Jews of Szydlowiec. The Jews found out about this, so in the morning they went out of the shtetl, and with the help of friendly shtetl Christians battered the would-be pogromists. The Jews later warned the peasants that if they attempted to assault Jews, all their fields would be set on fire. This warning caused many peasants to come to Jewish homes to say that they had had nothing to do with the proposed attack.

In the time of independent Poland, the government did more than a little to inflate anti-Semitic feelings. Szydlowiec was no exception, but the anti-Semitic proclamations that were posted by day with the support of the police, were for the most part torn down by night. The anti-Semitic policies of the Polish government brought much more trouble to the Jews of Szydlowiec than did the rowdy actions of the local anti-Semites or common scoundrels.

This anti-Semitism raised its head even more after Hitler's coming to power in 1933. Each year Jews grew more afraid of the influence of Jew-devouring Nazism on the Polish neighbors, who had never shown any great love for Jews. And even more, people feared the possibility of a Polish-German war and a German victory.

90 Szydlowiec Memorial Book

People were very afraid, but not even the greatest pessimist could have imagined that the Nazis had it in their sinister plans simply to exterminate all the Jews.

HOLOCAUST

CHRONICLE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF SZYDLOWIEC

by Isaac Milstein

In memory of my dear, precious parents Mordechai Menahem ben Z'vi Yehuda and Rachel bas Nachman, my brothers and sisters, their wives and husbands and children, the entire family, as well as the memory of all the martyrs of our town Szydlowiec, I have here related — in the form of a diary — the terrible moments of the murder of all the Jews who had lived there for generations before the Destruction.

I do not know whether I was simply lucky or whether Providence spared me so that I could tell and write about the unspeakable crimes committed by the Nazi murderers and their willing assistants.

With my own eyes I saw the Jews of our shtetl, our own dear families, from the youngest to the oldest, being driven to the deaths. Their weeping must have risen all the way to heaven.

At the Szydlowiec railroad station they were all packed into freight-cars, a hundred people to a car. The weather was frightfully hot. In these cars they were taken to the death camp at Trablinka, where they all perished.

Their last wish was: Should anyone survive this vast Jewish destruction, let him fulfill our last will and testament: that the horrible cruelties committed in our home-town by the Nazi hordes and their partners be recorded for future generations. What follows here is therefore not an ordinary diary, but a history — written in blood and tears.

from September 1939 to the Deportation

Friday, Sept. 1, 1939

Early in the morning the radio brought us the dreadful news: the Germans had crossed the Polish border. In Szydlowiec everything was still going on as if it were an ordinary Friday, but at noon we already saw the "steel birds" whose bombs had wrecked the railroad station.

Prices on everything were immediately frozen. The first thing we ran short of was bread. Lines formed at once, but life proceeded in an orderly fashion.

People began streaming in from nearby Skarzysk; they were afraid their town would be heavily bombed because of the munitions factories there. We made room for the refugees and helped them in whatever way we could.

As the new week began, soldiers from Radom filled the streets of Szydlowiec.

Monday, Sept. 4, 1939

Another air raid. Again the target was the railroad station, but this time something unexpected happened. In the forest near the station, Polish artillery units opened fire on the German planes. One plane crashed near the hills on the outskirts of town. People rushed to the spot, but the Polish police got there first and captured the two Nazi flyers, one of whom was wounded.

Wednesday, Sept. 6, 1939

People are running away in droves, civilians and soldiers alike. Polish police stopped one man who looked suspicious — he had no passport, he spoke neither Polish nor Yiddish. After

a brief investigation they took him outside the city and shot him.

Among the Polish soldiers was Bunem Blander, one of our own Szydłowiecs. We tried to persuade him to stay, but he wouldn't hear of it, and left.

We could tell the front line was moving closer by the masses of people who kept streaming through our town from the direction of Radom. The Polish troops assembled at the church. Large empty buses filled up with armed soldiers and headed toward Pshyskhe — transports for the front.

This situation continued until Thursday the 7th. During the night they woke us up to drive the cows over to the Polish army bases. Those were nightmarish hours anyway; who could sleep?

Friday, Sept. 8, 1939

Panic. People simply ran, without knowing where they were running to. Many ran to the Radom road, some to the Kielce road. The former had some hope of returning; the latter were running straight into the arms of the enemy.

Szydłowiec was abandoned. You couldn't even see a Polish policeman. Friday night no one slept. People who had lived through the first World War advised us to hide in cellars. That night there was a tremendous duel between the Polish artillery on the Radom road and the German artillery on the Kielce road. We spent that night in Jacob Shimon Weisbrot's cellar. He instructed us how to hide, because during World War I he had hid in the same cellar. At dawn the shooting stopped and we went back to our own homes.

Saturday, Sept. 9, 1939

Szydłowiec is quiet, calm, as though nothing had happened. Those who fled along the Radom road all returned;

there was no longer anywhere for them to run. Those who fled toward Kielce ran right into the Germans.

The calmness lasted, however, only until ten o'clock that morning, when a German tank unit roared into town, followed by soldiers on motorcycles. They burst in with such impetus that it seemed they had come to swallow us all up. But they didn't bother anyone. They only looked around and then rode over to the city hall. They immediately appointed a commandant and a few administrators. They then turned their attention to the Polish war-prisoners, of whom there were many. They took them all to the brewery outside the city, where they set up a camp. (The German troops were camped nearby.) Among those war prisoners were a good number of Jews. The Jewish community in Szydlowiec was very concerned; the most important thing now was to get them out of that camp. Whenever one of them showed up in town on a work detail, he was quickly provided with civilian clothing, so he could get away. At that time it was still possible to do that, because the security was not very tight. When the war prisoners were finally moved from Szydlowiec, there wasn't one Jew among them. I remember that during that "campaign" I gave away my brother's last suit of painter's work clothes.

The Jews who had run toward Kielce were held in a temporary camp for several weeks, together with the non-Jews. They suffered quite a bit there, but then were released.

The first order of the Germans was: A state of war exists. Curfew: six p.m. For almost every violation of these regulations, the death penalty.

On the third day after the Germans entered the city a peasant driving a load of hay stopped outside our house. From underneath the hay we heard a cry for help — in Yiddish. It was a wounded Jewish soldier. Nurse Rifka Zucker was called

and gave him first aid. Two days later, dressed in civilian clothes, he went back to his own shtetl.

Most of the German soldiers were older men and we managed to get along with them. They sold their tobacco ration very cheaply to the young boys in town.

Our first Yom Kippur under the Nazis was a very bitter one. A fire “broke out” in the synagogue. The Germans forced the Jews to put out the blaze. It was obvious that the Germans had set the fire themselves.

As long as the war against the Polish army went on, we managed somehow, because the Germans were busy with that. During that period we even did some work and some business. Merchants could still travel to Lodz on Notele Greenberg’s truck. Of course, things didn’t always go smoothly. On one occasion, when the loaded truck was ready to start back from Lodz, a gang of “Folksdeutschen” stole the truck. The Jews came home emptyhanded. Our people went stright to the commandant, who happened to be a decent man, and with the help of a young woman they succeeded in retrieving all the merchandise as well as the truck.

When the Germans finished with the Polish army they started on the Jews. Every day there was a new decree.

After Warsaw fell we began trading with the Jews there — by auto, by horse-and-wagon, by train (which was the most risky). We smuggled provisions into Warsaw and brought back various goods. I too took to the road and brought my family in Warsaw whatever I could. I met there with my mother’s brother Boruch. His mother — my grandmother Gitl — begged him to come to Szydlowiec, but he didn’t want to leave Warsaw.

One day I gambled and took the train, which was *verboten* to Jews. Two Jewish women and I were waiting for the next train. A young Polish boy recognized them and began pushing

the two women toward a German guard who stood at the passageway to the train. Fortunately for us, this boy couldn't speak a word of German, and the guard, noticing how roughly the boy was treating the women, whacked him over the head and gave him a lecture on how a gentleman should behave toward ladies. So for the time being, we were safe.

On one of my trips I was stopped at the Biolobrzeg bridge by a German guard. He took my documents and started marching me to the local commandant, who was notorious for his brutality. With the guard pointing his rifle at my back, I was marching straight ahead. When a very pretty woman came into view, the guard ordered me to halt. I was afraid to turn around. He and the woman talked for a while. Then he called me over, handed me my papers, and said I should be grateful to this woman that I wasn't going to end up in the hands of the commandant. He told me to "cross the bridge and disappear."

That winter was an unusually cold one with severe snowstorms. Our commandant ordered the Judenrat to provide a labor force to clean the snow from the main roads in the area. Another labor force was assigned to dig up the bodies of Polish soldiers who had been buried where they had fallen in battle and take them to Christian cemeteries. These bodies had been in the earth for almost a year and the work was very unpleasant.

The Jewish soldiers who had been captured by the Germans were released. Among them I remember: Notte Broitman, Pinye Zeidenfeld, Vigdor Kaufman, Joseph Ronchke, Yankl Milstein (my cousin), Michal Dimont, Isaac Greenberg, Velve Vester (he was critically ill). Of those, only Notte Broitman and my cousin are still living. Shmuel Lachs was the only one who made his way to Anderson's army and reached Eretz Israel. Of the Szydlowiecs who fell on the front I remember: Joseph Toyter (my schoolmate, he was the son of Notte and Dasse); Yerakhmiel Erlich (son of Jonah and Ethel),

Yankele Radolnick (son of Israel and Leah), and Moishele Chustetsky.

That winter the Judenrat opened a public soup kitchen in the home of Yeshaya Opatowski. It was meant primarily for the hundreds of poor refugees, but also for the local needy. Isaac Shteinman gave a great deal of time and effort to this soup kitchen.

The terrible situation we were in, with all its dangers, led to organized efforts by the young people to escape to the Russian side. At first it was mainly young couples. Those who had been planning to get married now did so. There was a continuous round of weddings. The only thing the newlyweds needed for the journey was a backpack and a watch. They didn't even have to go to the rabbi, because Shmuel Aaron the shammas was issuing the "marriage certificates." We called this the "backpack season."

My brother Avrom Chaim and his friend Avrom Wahlberg married the Brandmesser sisters and went to the Russian border. Avrom Chaim didn't want to worry my mother, so he kept it a secret. She wouldn't have let him go. My brother and his wife both perished there.

Every day new German decrees. They shut off the electricity in Jewish homes, they confiscated all garments with fur on them, they ordered Jews to cut their beards, they forbade *shechita* (kosher slaughtering of animals). Breaking any of these regulations was punishable by death. Jewish butchers risked their lives and slaughtered the animals in secret, until they were betrayed by an informer.

Purim came and went, but there was no new miracle to save us from the worst Haman in our history. Pesach arrived and we observed it as best we could. I don't think anyone had to go without matzo.

The Jewish tanners have started work again. Since only the tanneries of Notte and Shmerl Eisenberg are functioning

legally (under supervision of a German), a shortage of leather has developed. Those who are able to do so have resumed their work despite the risk to their lives. Aside from being dangerous it has presented them with many technical difficulties, such as setting up a primitive shop to treat the leather chemically. My brother Yisrolke and Yeshaya Henig set up such a little "factory" in the home of a peasant in the village of Smilew. (They paid him well for it.) The shop consisted of two large kettles in which they prepared the leather (during the night, of course). I even helped them for a few nights. It was hard work. They operated their "business" until one night the police burst in, led by Mandel, head of the German Price Control Office. They loaded the stuff on a big farm wagon and carted everything off to the city hall, including the "manufacturers" themselves.

It could have ended very tragically right then and there, but fortunately the Judenrat had a good relationship with the commandant. They tried to convince him to drop the matter. Meanwhile, Yeshaya Henig's mother came running in to our house all upset:

"Our children are in danger! We must save them! I still have a piece of jewelry left! We must do something!"

All of us went to the city hall. It didn't take very long. The two prisoners were released. I don't know how the Judenrat did it, because my parents and Yeshaya's mother had brought along money and jewelry, but they didn't have to use it.

During this period a strange thing happened in Szydlowiec which is worth recording. Actually it started a few years before the war, when a circus came to town. It was a circus like all other circuses, with various attractions such as fireeaters, acrobats, trapeze artists, etc. They also had a fortune-teller — they called him a "medium." His partner in the act was a woman whom he asked questions which she always answered correctly. In the audience was a young Jewish

woman. She and the medium met after the show. They fell in love. No one knows how far the affair went, but when the circus left Szydlowiec, we forgot all about it.

But a few weeks after the war broke out, the same circus artist showed up in our town — as a big-shot among the Germans. It turned out that before the war he had been a German spy and the circus was his cover. He was now on crutches with a wounded leg. He immediately looked up his Jewish sweetheart and again they spent a lot of time together. In order to change her identity into a “Folksdeutsch” he asked her mother to swear that her daughter was born during the first world war and that her real father was a German.

To provide his sweetheart with some kind of livelihood, he confiscated Pinchas Rosenberg’s newspaper kiosk and turned it over to her. She sold German newspapers such as *Der Sturmer* and *Der Voelkischer Beobachter*, as well as Polish newspapers that were published by the German occupation authorities. She looked like a “real Aryan,” with her blue eyes, blond hair and straight nose. She even wore a medallion with a swastika.

Exactly how long this went on I don’t remember, but when I was in the camp at Janiszew, my mother went to her for help in getting me released. Other mothers from Szydlowiec did the same thing. But how could she help anyone when she herself was helpless? With her Aryan looks, if she had left Szydlowiec and gone somewhere where no one knew her, she would have had a good chance of surviving the war. But she stayed — and the story has a tragic ending.

There came a day when the Gestapo drove up to her kiosk and took her away. They didn’t even allow her to say goodbye to her parents.

That was the last we heard of her.

Tuesday, August 20, 1940

Early in August 1940 a rumor spread that Germans from

the Lublin District were coming to Szydlowiec on August 20th to round up unmarried Jews for labor camps. So there have been a lot of weddings recently.

As promised, on Tuesday, August 20th the German trucks drove in from Lublin and went directly to the Judenrat. There had already been a decree ordering all able-bodied unmarried men to report at 8 a.m. at the newly built nail factory. Everyone had to bring his necessities with him because the men selected would have to leave immediately. Anyone failing to report to the gathering place — his father would be taken instead. No one wanted to endanger his own father, so many young men reported — my brother Yisrolke and I among them. Whoever had a Judenrat document showing that he was the sole breadwinner in his family was exempted.

Precisely at 8 o'clock the commission began its work. The doctor examined everyone but rejected hardly anyone. Then we were loaded into the trucks without even an opportunity to say goodbye to our families.

By evening we had reached the camp near the town of Juzefow. The camp commandant, an S.S.-man, came out to meet us. He counted heads and sent half of us to Janiszew on farm wagons. The other half stayed in the camp at Juzefow. My brother and I were in the Janiszew group.

It was midnight before we arrived at the camp. The commandant, an Austrian German named Schmidt, greeted us more humanly than his "colleague" at Juzefow. They had set up a barrack for Szydlowiecs only. We found a place to sleep. In the morning we saw that we were in a camp consisting of several barracks. There were no farmhouses in view. To get to the neighboring town of Zawichost you had to cross the Vistula River by boat or ferry.

They gave us each a little bit of black coffee and then divided us into groups. Each group had a leader who was responsible for getting the work done and for feeding his men.

(Meals consisted of a slice of bread, soup and coffee.) The work was very hard. The group leaders were Poles, the guards were Ukrainians and Folksdeutschen (Ethnic Germans). They supervised us with an iron fist. The worst one was Warechawski, a Folksdeutsh.

Our job was to make sure that the Vistula would not overflow its banks in the spring. We built a great wall of earth that stretched for miles along the bank.

It was possible to get along with Commandant Schmidt. In exchange for money or valuable objects he excused people from work or even released them. In this way my brother and Yeshaya Henig went home. I wanted to follow their example, but missed my chance — our “good” commandant was replaced by a German named Grimeisen who introduced a strict regime. At one rollcall he selected men whose looks he didn’t like and sent them to the camp at Belzec, near the Russian border. Among them were Peretz Orenbach, Ben Zion Milstein (my cousin), Yeshaya Mendl Eisenberg, and many others. All of them were released from Belzec in December, except Yeshaya Mendl, who was shot.

Yeshaya Mendl was practically helpless. All his life he had done nothing but study Torah. We were fellow students at the the Talmud Torah and at Yerakhmiel Meir’s heder. In the camp they gave him an easy job — sweeping the yard. When his uncle, David Neiberg, an official in the Judenrat, came to get him released from Janiszew, he was no longer there.

The camp had a canteen where you could buy bread, marmalade and other things. It was run by a woman named Weinstock from Apola. All you needed was the money.

In September the nights grew cooler. We started thinking about escaping, because the winter here would be unbearable. One day, right after Motl Bergman ladled out the soup, we discovered that two of our group were missing — Yankele Kishkat (he was called that because his father supplied the

wurst manufacturer with kishkes) and Eliash (Rifka Kriss's brother-in-law). Unfortunately they didn't know the way to the Vistula. They got lost and ended up in a place not far from Janiszew. The guards brought Eliash back, but they shot Yankele.

With the help of the Judenrat, the parents of Yankele and Yeshaya Mendl Eisenberg obtained the bodies of their sons and buried them in the Jewish cemetery at Szydlowiec.

The high holidays arrived. We had a good cantor in our midst — Berele Burshtinski. Prayerbooks were provided by the tailors Mendl Wasserstein and Hershl Shlock, who used to go to Zawichost every day, along with Itche Silberstein, who did the buying.

Every Sunday, no matter how cold it was, we were taken down to the river to bathe and to delouse our clothing. We kept as close to each other as possible, for warmth. In October we still stood barefoot at our work.

The only comfort we ever got was when mothers would come to the camp to visit their sons. One Sunday Beyla Heshkes came to see her two sons, Yankl Silberman and one whose name I don't remember. She brought packages for some of the other prisoners, including me.

I want to mention here some of the other Szydlowiecs that I remember who were in the camp with me: Mendl Katz, the brothers H. and S. Rotman, Gershon Zucker, the brothers Brones, Abba Ingerovicz, the brothers Wolowski, Meir Buchbinder, Gershon Kochan, Saul Zlatowicz, the Richter cuosins, Shiya Schwartzfuter; Jekutiel Gzemba, whose stepfather Shmuel Tsalels was a member of the Judenrat, was there by mistake. (There were many others whose names I don't remember.)

Exodus from Janiczew

On the morning of November 11th something happened

that we never even dreamed of. When it happened, we still didn't believe it.

In accordance with our usual routine, we got out of our dirty wooden bunks and lined up for roll call. We noticed that they were marching all the other groups off to work, except ours, the Szydłowiecs. It was not a good sign. Were they going to send us to a death camp? Sunk in these gloomy thoughts we saw, coming out of the guard-house, the commandant and — the Secretary of the Judenrat, Finkler. Our surprise grew even greater, but our fear diminished. Finkler approached us with papers in his hand. He called out our names one by one and we followed him through the open gate until we reached the Vistula, where a boat was waiting to take us to Zawichost.

It was a new Exodus from Egypt.

In Zawichost we didn't have long to wait. The train was already there. The sudden, unexpected freedom filled us with indescribable happiness.

At the city hall our parents and many friends were waiting. We embraced and kissed and shed tears of joy.

The Szydłowiecs in the Juzefow camp could not expect another such miraculous rescue, so they did it differently — they escaped one or two at a time, until not one Szydłowiec was left in the camp.

Those of us who had been rescued from Janiszew and Juzefow were allowed to rest up for two weeks and then they put us to work again. That winter there again were severe snowstorms. The Judenrat had to provide crews to clean the roads. The situation was such that no one dared appear in the street without a shovel or a broom. Families were permitted to bring food to the men working on the roads.

During the time I was in the Janiszew camp my younger sister Freydl-Idess became engaged to Pintche Vester from Skarzysk. The wedding date was set for Hanuka, despite the difficult and dangerous conditions of the time. The ceremony

was performed in our house. The officiant was not the rabbi but the shammes, Shmuel Aaron Toyter. The guests were our family and a few neighbors, barely a minyan.

My brother-in-law Pintche remained in Szydlowiec and tried to earn a living by buying and selling whatever he could. Most dangerous was that he was dealing in rawhide leather.

No matter how heavy the heart was, Jews never lost their habit of “making jokes.” For example:

Mordkhe Shtenshliva (we called him Motte Borsht) used to say that Hitler had done him a big favor. Thanks to him a lot of refugees came to our shtetl, among them three young men who married his three daughters. How would this have been possible in normal times without dowries? Motte told his sons-in-law a long story about how he had buried a treasure in the walls of his house, and as soon as the war ended he would turn it over to them . . .

After it was decreed that all Jews must cut off their beards, Yankl Hertz (Yankl Brilliant) saw the Bath Attendant clean shaven for the first time in his life. He burst out laughing. “I’ve heard of a king without a country, and a rabbi without a congregation, but a bathhouse attendant without a beard — that I never expected to see!”

Hitler came to a Jew and asked for a loan. The Jew didn’t respond so quickly. Hitler asked him: “Are you afraid I won’t pay it back?” The Jew replied: “You took Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, France and other countries. When you return them all, you won’t owe me anything either.”

We told jokes in Yiddish and Polish, jokes with which we tried to sweeten our bitter lives a little bit.

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As the refugees kept streaming into Szydlowiec from other towns, the Germans issued an order setting up an isolation center for homeless Jews. This was done in the Women’s

Section of the synagogue. Supervisors were the hygienists in the Judenrat. After the order was issued that Jews could no longer live in the villages, new refugees arrived. Whoever had family in Szydlowiec had a place to live, but those who had no relatives and were poor stayed in the isolation center.

By 1941 there was already a death sentence for any Jew caught traveling by train, unless you had first obtained a special permit. Pintche, with his Aryan looks, was one of those who took the risk. He was recognized, however, by some Poles, who turned him in to the police. At the next station, the police shot him. This was about six months after he married my sister. A few months later she gave birth to a child who was already an orphan.

Pintche was the first victim in our family.

After his death my sister rented out her home to a kindergarten for girls, run by three highly educated women from Lodz. (They were sisters.) All day the children were either in our house or in our yard. They were taught Yiddish and Polish, but most important, someone was taking care of them. Most of them were the children of well-to-do families. The existence of this kindergarten had to be kept secret from the Germans, but it continued to function until the deportations.

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The German raids are more and more frequent. New labor camps have been opened at Jedlna, Wolnew, Wysznowke (near Kielce). Wysznowke was a small camp, near a quarry.

Jedlne is a town on the other side of Radom. The Germans have built an air field there. From as far away as Szydlowiec we had to supply workers for that project. The head of the German labor office was Ribitsky (a Folksdeutsch). He instituted the system of work-cards. Every week they had to be stamped at the city hall while Ribitsky was present. On the spot he selected people and sent them to the labor camps. The

only exceptions were people who had cards showing that they were working in another enterprise. Despite the great danger involved, a considerable number of Jews copied Ribitsky's stamp, so they could get out of his murderous claws.

The head of the Judenrat labor office was Kalman Rosenbaum, whose father was a respected Jewish leader in Szydlowiec. Although Kalman came from a fine family, he did not always follow their tradition. He was later killed during the deportation, in a very brutal manner.

The third labor camp was in Wolnew, where there had previously been a camp for Russian war prisoners.

I remained in Szydlowiec.

One day a Polish shoemaker named Parczewski appeared in the marketplace selling new shoes. Suddenly the infamous "Price Control" gang — Mandel, Swiedko and Smidke — swooped down on him and demanded to know where he had gotten such fine shoes. At first he refused to tell them, but when they started beating him he admitted that he had bought the "uppers" from Godl Honigman, the son of Leybush Meir Todres. They arrested the Pole. Honigman could not stand it when they started beating his wife and told them that he had bought the leather from Yeshaya Klawforde, a tanner. They then beat Klawforde unmercifully until he admitted that he had bought the rawhide from Pintche Vester, son-in-law of Motl Tokasz (my father).

They came to our house in the middle of the night. We had arranged that whenever the door was opened for Germans, the younger members of the family would run out through the yard. We did so. They beat up my father and took him with them because they could not find Pintche, who had been shot by the Germans some time before.

Nine o'clock in the morning my father came home. He was unrecognizable. They had given him a drug that put him in a state where he told them everything he knew. They had done

the same with Honigman and Klaforde. My father was sick for several weeks. Yeshaya Klaforde was imprisoned at Radom.

Up until 1942 Szydlowiec was one of the few cities in Poland that had no wall or fence around its ghetto. It was simply illegal to use the "new road" — Kosciuskowska — which started at Kielce Street, went through the old cemetery and ended at the Radom road. The Jews who lived near this street were in a difficult situation and had to be very careful. It happened, for example, that Shimon Weizhandler's daughter crossed the forbidden street early one morning. She was shot without warning.

In December 1941 the Germans announced that beginning January 1, 1942 the Jews of Szydlowiec would be forbidden to go outside the city limits. This was a severe blow because it meant we could not go into the village to buy anything or to make deliveries of finished work (shoes, clothing, etc.). Those who still had business with the village had to complete it by January first.

I myself had some work from a Pole and a Folksdeutsch near Radom. A group of us from Szydlowiec and several from Radom rented a horse-and-wagon and started out for Radom. Up to Mlodoczin, things went smoothly. But then a car containing Swedka and Smidke and other police stopped us. They searched our wagon, told us to unload everything and marched us off the road into a field. They were going to take us all to Radom.

Realizing that there was nothing to lose, I explained to them that we hadn't left the ghetto, because in Szydlowiec there really was no ghetto. They checked my papers and right there in the field make a "selection" — Radomites to the left, Szydlowiec to the right. They told us to run and pick up our things and we escaped with mere blows. The others they took to Radom.

The order against leaving the city led to a further

impoverishment of Szydlowiec, but people continued to risk their lives, trying to outsmart the murderous enemy and somehow earn a living.

In 1942 a new labor camp was opened in the quarries at Smilew. The German supervisor, Schroeder, presented himself as a Communist and people trusted him. The work there was not very difficult.

In order to evade the various German rundups, we built hiding places, which some people called bunkers.

The summer of 1942 was the worst. Not a week passed without another tragedy. One day a gang of Polish hoodlums tried to rob us. Some of our young fellows resisted and drove them off. A few days later they returned with the Gestapo, who started shooting indiscriminately. Among the victims were Yehezkel Farber and Meir Tenenbaum.

Someone reported to the Germans that Sarah Ita Freed, wife of Benyamin Lazer Yankels, was baking bread illegally. Swedko and Smidka rushed into her home and found the oven warm. They shot her on the spot. Shmuel Aaron the shammes and many others perished around that time. Life had become a wilderness.

Every week we had to report and have our work cards checked. If they had no place to send workers to, they stamped the card and you were free for another week. When the trucks came from Jedlne, they grabbed anyone they could get their hands on.

Somehow I avoided all these selections and was never taken to Jedlne, where the following perished: Meir Kaplan's son, who had come from Cracow; Yudel Badchen's son, Moshe-Chaim Wignanski (his wife was left with young children). Notte Zucker was shot in Radom during that period, also leaving a young wife and children.

The *werk-schutz* (industrial police) from Skarzysk and the Germans from the camp at Wolnew came more and more

often to Szydlowiec and left with truckloads of slaves for their enterprises.

One day the Judenrat received an order to provide a list of "Communists, thieves and prostitutes." The Judenrat's reply was (1) that when the war broke out, all the Communists had fled to the Russians, and (2) that there had never been any Jewish prostitutes in Szydlowiec. Thieves? The Judenrat had no such names. But the Germans somehow found out about Shmulik Brandmesser. No one knew how, but they learned that at the end of 1939 or the beginning of 1940 a German freight-car carrying chocolate and cigarettes was diverted to Szydlowiec. The children had a good time with the tasty milk-chocolate and the cigarettes enjoyed a brisk sale, but the identity of the "artists" who pulled off this stunt remained a secret.

When Shmulik Brandmesser landed in the Radom prison — I don't know what his crime was — it occurred to the Gestapo that he might know something about that "stolen train." They demanded that he give them the names of everyone who had anything to do with it. Shmulik told them they were all Poles from the village of Pagrzale, which is in the middle of a forest. It would not be easy to get into the house because the gang was heavily armed.

The Gestapo went to the place and took Shmulik with them. The plan was that he would enter the house first and bring the Poles out on some pretext, so there would be no shooting. They surrounded the house and waited, while Shmulik went inside. But he did not come out, so they started firing. When no one fired back, they broke into the house and — found it empty.

It turned out that Shmulik had planned it all out beforehand. He knew that the peasant who lived in that remote place had discovered a secret tunnel in it that led deep into the forest. While the Germans stood outside waiting for him and

the Poles to come out, he and the peasant escaped through the secret passageway — and vanished.

Early in August 1942 I was caught in one of the German roundups. They took me straight to the city hall and put me in a room with a group of other young men. That evening Ribitsky came in and started his sadistic tricks. He selected the strongest men and threw them across the table. He did a lot of other things and didn't stop until he tired himself out.

Early next morning the doors were opened. The trucks were already waiting for us. They took us first to Wolnew, then to Rashkew, several miles away. They were laying a short rail line from there to Wolnew, where they were planning to build an airfield. But they took our work-cards away from us.

At the new work-site I found a cousin of mine, Shmuel Eisenberg, who had already been there for a long time. At the end of the day they took us back to Wolnew, which was still a temporary camp. They had not yet built bunks and we all slept on the hard floor.

The next morning they took us to Rashkew again in little trucks called "lorkes." When you loaded them up with sand and stones you could dump the stuff out mechanically. In our "lorke" was a young Pole who started kidding around and opened the gate. Several of us fell out onto the road. Luckily we weren't going very fast. I was knocked out by the fall, but when I came to I found myself near the home of the Folksdeutsch for whom I had done some tailoring. I went there and told him the whole story. He sent me to a supervisor who happened to live in Szydlowiec and I arranged to go with him after his day's work. I paid him well for the trip, and that's how I got out of that situation with a whole skin.

My arrival at home was a complete surprise, but there was one problem: my work card was still at Wolnew, and without that card it was dangerous to appear in public. I had to keep

out of Ribitsky's way; the police had no idea how I'd gotten away from Wolnew.

One day I was in my sister's store when two young people suddenly ran in, followed by Ribitsky. He demanded to see our work-cards. The others complied, but what could I do? Without a word he started beating me so brutally that I thought it was the end. My sister fainted. From out of nowhere a Jewish policeman appeared (his name was Buskowada). On Ribitsky's command he arrested me and led me to the Jewish jail, where he locked me in a cell and left.

I looked around to see where I was. An empty room, a bunk knocked together out of boards, a long bench, the window small and barred. I had to get out of there right away — tomorrow might be too late. I moved the bench up to the door and started using it as a battering-ram. The door sprang its hinges. I spent the night among the gravestones in the Jewish cemetery near the jail, and at daylight, when it was legal for Jews to appear on the street, I walked home as quickly as I could.

I couldn't stay there, of course. It would be the first place Ribitsky would look. I "moved in" with neighbors named Paris, who had a good hiding-place.

* * *

As if we didn't have enough new troubles, we were still plagued by the old ones. We had assumed that the business with the leather and my brother-in-law Pintche had been forgotten. We were mistaken. One day my father received a summons to appear at the *Sondergericht* in Radom, where the trial of Yeshaya Klawforde was taking place — he had already been in the Radom jail for several months for "illegal dealings" in leather.

The trial was scheduled for August 10, 1942. My father was terribly frightened. There was a Jew from Lodz in Szydlowiec

who knew a little about the law. (His name was Blatt and he was a frequent guest in our house.) His advice was that my father should stand trial because, in his opinion, they would let him go free.

The day that my father went to Radom was like Tisha B'Av in our house. The farewells were heart-rending. We knew what might happen to him if he fell into the hands of the Nazis.

The chief witnesses at the trial were Swiedko and Smidka. Pintche's parents had sent in his death certificate. So the chief defendant was Klawforde, whom they sentenced to death. Since no evidence was produced to link my father with the trading in rawhide, he was released. The condemned prisoner took the verdict calmly. The sentence was not carried out immediately. Six weeks later, when the deportation took place, the Nazis brought him to Szydłowiec, where he was shot, along with many other Jews, in a mass grave at the cemetery.

My Brother's Tragic Death

My brother Yisrolke was exempt from forced labor because he had an extra card marked "Flucht-arbeit," but it had not been issued by the Judenrat. When the German labor office discovered this they arrested him and sent him to Wolnew.

From his previous experience in Janiszew, he knew how to deal with the camp administrators and managed to obtain his release. He did not want to make the trip home on foot, however, and tried to find a wagon that was going to Szydłowiec. The opportunity presented itself in the shape of a group of Jews with "green passes" who were traveling to Szydłowiec. (These were people who collected old rags and scrap metal for the Germans; they had permission to move around outside the ghetto.)

They left Wolnew very early in the morning on September 3rd, a day that the Jews later called “Bloody Thursday.” The S.S. and Ukrainian fascists had surrounded Szydlowiec and rounded up everyone on the street. They took them first to the city hall, where they “arrested” them, and then to the “Hasag” camp.

The wagon on which my brother and the group of Jews were traveling approached the town and got as far as the Polish cemetery on the hill with three crosses. Without warning, an S.S. patrol started shooting at them, killing everyone in the wagon. The awful news reached my mother and father very soon, but because I was in the hiding-place, I did not know about it until the next morning when I walked into our house. The scene shattered me completely. A minyan reciting the morning prayers, my parents sitting shiva — what words of consolation could anyone possibly offer at a time like that?

Every day for a week there were services at our house because it was right before Rosh Hashona. Sorrow emanated from every corner. My mother’s despair made her seriously ill. She kept asking, amidst her tears:

“And what of my youngest son? Who knows what terrible things are happening to him?” The saying goes: A mother’s heart is a prophet. As my sister-in-law Tsippe told me after the war, my youngest brother Avrom Chaim died in a Soviet prison in Alma Ata. She visited him there a few times. The last time she saw him he had been severely beaten. The next day he was dead. She could not get any information as to how or why. How strange: Both my brothers died in the same month and the same year — Yisrolke at the hands of the German murderers and Avrom Chaim at the hands of the Bolsheviks in Russia. He was barely 24 years old.

September 1942. The high holy days, the fearful days. Never before had that word been so suitable. The Ten Penitential days seemed like ten years. Rumors of deportation — the thing we feared the most. Some people tried to get themselves assigned to work-sites, some prepared to escape. But where to? The Poles lay in wait everywhere.

Our famiy decided to hide. My Grandmother Gitl, who lived with us for years after my Grandfather Nachman's death, begged her grandchildren and greatchildren to save themselves by any means possible. My sister Freydl dressed herself up in peasant clothing, took her little child and started walking to her mother-in-law's in Skarzysk. Some Poles recognized her immediately and she barely made it back alive. All roads were closed. My Aunt Hannah (my mother's sister from Lodz) took her two children, Rifkele and Shiyele, and headed for Werzbice, where there was s small camp. Her husband, Yosl Eisenberg, who was an invalid, remained with us.

2. FROM DEPORTATION TO THE CAMPS

Sunday, Sept. 20, 1942

Erev Yom Kippur. We are preparing to welcome the great holiday, but in a much different way than usual. From early morning, people have been streaming to the Jewish cemetery to pray to the dead, beseeching them to intercede with Heaven for the Jews. My mother visited the grave of my brother Yisroelke, who had been brutally murdered by the Nazis a few days before Rosh Hashonah. He was the second victim in our family.

The Kol Nidre services were held in private homes. Our family met in Shimon Kartshusker's house on Zamkowa Street. The prayer leader was my Uncle Yosl Eisenberg, a refugee from Lodz.

Monday, Sept. 21, 1942

Yom Kippur. In the illegal "congregations" Jews prayed with deep feeling and much weeping. Everyone prayed for a little bit more of life. People said they had already seen the boxcars waiting at the railroad station. The Judenrat knew nothing about this. The Germans had "promised" the Judenrat that the Jews of Szydlowiec would not be deported.

Tuesday, Sept. 22, 1942

Early morning. Many people have already assembled at the "*bodns*" with their backpacks. They are waiting for a truck to take them to Lipowa-Pola, a small camp for construction work. You had to pay to get in to that particular camp. The porters tried to stop them. "What do you mean — you'll save yourselves and leave us at their mercy?" It was no use, however. The truck arrived and those who had registered left the city.

Faivl Steinowicz tells me that our friend Moyshe Itskowitz is working in Chaim Goldberg's shop. Goldberg had two shops — shoemakers and tailors. The men brought their own tools and sewing machines. The master shoemaker was David Wystonshko; Velvl Stark was the master tailor. Faivl and I went there but could not get in. Moyshe came out and told me that if we wanted to work there, we would have to pay. It was like a Noah's Ark; you could enter and save yourself from the flood, but the ark was locked. That night Faivl and his children went to Wiarbice, where there was a small camp.

That same evening a meeting was held at Menahem Lefkowitz's house. Shmulik Brandmesser told us that rather than get into the trains we should go into the forest. But we had no weapons. Fists cannot fight against rifles. Shmulik left and things remained as they were. No one slept that night. We could hear the trucks roaring by, some carrying people to

Starchowicz, some to Wolanow. It went on till three in the morning. At four o'clock a fleet of trucks came in on the new road to Radom. They stopped at the movie house near Avrom Beyla Sheyndl's orchard. The first shot rang out — someone had tried to escape into the orchard. I don't know who the victim was.

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 1942

Six o'clock in the morning the loudspeakers announced that at precisely 8 o'clock everyone must report to the haymarket or to Wolnoszchi Square. Anyone found at home after that would be shot on the spot. Each person was permitted to take "luggage" weighing no more than 20 pounds. This order was enforced by the police, who went to every street. The spasmodic weeping of women and children was beyond description. In our house we prepared to go to the designated place. My father still believed that the Germans would not kill anyone. God would protect us, he said.

People began streaming toward the haymarket. Our neighbor, Shiya Ronchke, took his wife and child and whatever he could load into a baby carriage and went to Chaim Goldberg's shop. Everyone was on the move, it was almost 8 o'clock.

Some observant Jews had gone to the *mikveh* to immerse themselves before the massacre. There were still some optimists who had erected *sukkahs*. I remember the one that Simcha-Leybush, husband of Freyda-Reyzl Eisenstadt, put up. My brother-in-law's sister Beyla was on crutches with a broken leg. One of the murderers decided to put her out of her misery, as one does a horse — he shot her.

The town was so closely guarded that it was impossible to escape. Every few feet, a murderer with a machine-gun. Some

were stationed around the town limits, some at the haymarket, some at the city hall.

There were cases where grandmothers pleaded with their daughters to leave their children with them and try to escape. Very few did that. It is not so easy to leave your children behind. They all died together. That is what happened with my two sisters, Tsipporah and Freydl, God rest their souls.

As if there weren't already enough victims, two more children were added to the list when David Frishman's daughter Reyza gave birth to a son that night. She and her baby were taken to the haymarket. The same happened with Simcha Leybush Blander's daughter Hannah. The grandmother, Miriam Leah, refused to let her daughter and the newborn baby leave the house. You can imagine what happened to them. Later, a small child was found in the home of Lefkowitz and his wife Shifra (Boruch Konowski's daughter). The murderous Ukrainian who found it started screaming, "Where is the child's mother?" I cannot bear to think what he did to that child.

By 8 o'clock the town was empty, except for the Jews who stayed in their hiding-places.

Schroeder arrived. He ran a labor camp in the quarry at Smilew. He liked to pick his workers himself. Everyone tried to get into his group. Later the District Commander, Schippers, arrived and made a short speech to the crowd: Whoever gave him a thousand zloty would be released. Panic set in. Anyone who had the required sum of money turned it in. Those who had no money were lined up and taken directly to the railroad station, where the trains were waiting.

The whole business with the thousand zloty was a trick. Those who turned in their money were driven to the castle and locked up until Friday, with no food or water. The wives of the Jewish police were supposed to be released. They were all at the home of our neighbor Moyshe Levy the baker. They stayed

there one day and then were taken to the castle. The same fate awaited the workers in the shops — first they were taken to the castle and then to the railroad station.

Those who had gathered at the haymarket were taken to the new road that runs from Jaschomba Street to the old cemetery. In front of the cemetery, several Jews attempted to break out of the ranks. They fell under a hail of bullets. Two managed to escape. Moyshe Kuperberg (today in Brazil) ran into Moyshe Yudl Feldman's house and hid. Later he was among the workers who came to our "block." (barracks). The other one, who hid in the cemetery, also ended up in our block. Later, Hananiah Grundman, Chaim Joseph's son, was found among the dead.

Heartrending cries of thousands of men, women and children. It was as if masses of people were walking to their own funerals. Many of the older men had put on their *kitels* or *taleisim* underneath their outer clothing. All along the way to the railroad station — five miles outside Szydlowiec — lay the bodies of Jews who had been shot.

The cemetery became a slaughter-house. The Nazis brought many Jews here who had been arrested in Radom and shot them. Among them were many Szydlowiecrs. Some that I remember are Yeshaya Klaporda, Kalman Rosenbaum, Hannah Batye Briks (granddaughter of Porye the baker.) Prominent among the murderers were Smidke and Swiedko.

One work-group was assigned to dig a mass grave. All the dead were buried there. Then another work-group rode around with horse-and-wagon and collected all the bodies on the roads and in the houses. In a small room in the office of the Mayor (Zulikowski) they later found the bodies of Abraham and Perele Warshawsky and their young child.

Schroeder, who tried to round up his workers, assured everyone that he was not a Nazi but a Communist. Many Jews trusted him. He lived in the home of the Buchbinders — he hid

them and kept them from being deported. But as soon as everyone had gone, he reported to the police that some Jews were hiding in "his house."

One work-group went from house to house and sealed up the Jewish homes. On the outside wall of each house they pasted a red sign declaring that it was now the property of the Third Reich. They boarded up all the doors, but that didn't stop the Poles from getting in and cleaning out these houses of all their contents.

For this work-group the Nazis opened a soup kitchen in the home of Fishl the Tanner. Chief cook was Avrom Yitzhok Gritshman. The Polish baker Gishko was forced to supply the bread.

The workers who went from house to house on this "job" saw many terrible scenes. Yankl Rabinowicz (we called him the Kishka-maker) lay in his bed, facing the wall. The Ukrainian gendarme had demanded to know why Yankl had not reported along with everyone else. He did not shoot him, however; he split his head open with the butt of his rifle. Yankl's last words were "shema yisroel . . ."

Moyshe Singer lived in a house owned by a Christian woman who hid his whole family and his wife's family. A few hours after the deportation she reported them. They were all shot.

The Ehrlich's had left their child behind in their house. Karpinski, the German officer who found him, shot the child on the spot.

In Saul Zucker's house lived the dentist, Taubenhau. He was a convert, but he went along with all the other Jews. His wife was shot in the courtyard.

Two Poles reported that a Jewish woman was hiding at the apothecary's. (The woman was Devorele Stark.) The murderers came and shot her. Leybush Schwartzfuter took poison.

Avromele Fuchs' mother was found — she had been shot

by Motilka. Shlomo Neiberg's body, in *tallis* and *tefillin*, was found in the attic. Zachariah Blizinski tried to run into the street and paid with his life. Porye the baker was found dead inside her home.

The most brutal of the murderers were Fuchs, Bauer and Karpinski.

The "*Chevre Kedisha*" (the burial commando) worked all day long. My group was taken to Pinkert's building, where the post office was located. In the yard there was an abandoned building that was once a factory where they made pots and pans. This became our barracks or "block."

All night long our Polish neighbors, with the help of the firemen, looted the Jewish homes. "Distinguishing" themselves in this work were the brothers Romek and Antek Plaskota.

The situation in the castle grew more and more desperate. **Half the Jews of Szydlowiec were crowded into the courtyard** there. It was inhuman. People paid in gold for a drink of water. Bread or anything else to eat was out of the question. There was a lake nearby and for a pot of dirty water Itka paid 50 zloty — she needed it for her sick child. Things were so bad that people there envied those who had gone into the trains.

Thursday, Sept. 24, 1942

One bloody day has gone by. What next? The Jewish police are again taking groups of workers to city hall. The work of collecting the dead is not over. Poles keep bringing information about places where there are bodies of Jews who had been shot. The Germans are not allowing anyone through. They search everyone. One of them noticed the body of a man in the lake — he ordered it brought to shore and searched all the pockets.

Several places were set up to store the goods taken from Jewish homes. One such place was the Corso movie house, the

other in the city hall. For the purpose of making this collection, Poles in the city lent their horses and wagons. Accompanying them were gendarmes, a Jewish policeman and several workers. Going through the Jewish homes, the Jewish workers tried to stay close to Osterbach, the chief guard, who was an exception among the Germans. He never shot anyone and he often closed his eyes to things he didn't want to see. There was one other decent man — a chauffeur for the Nazis.

The work of searching for hidden treasure in Jewish homes didn't always go smoothly. There was a certain Mietek (and his brother Tomashew) who was a specialist in finding such hiding-places. He believed that nothing should be left for the Poles. The S.S. once came to a house where they found some Poles robbing the place. They shot one of them on the spot.

Friday, Sept. 25, 1942

Erev Succos. The workers march to Pinkert's. They stand and wait. This is unusual. Everyone is afraid that something terrible is about to happen. Their fears were not groundless.

All the murderers were at the castle. They led out the Jews there. Then several of the Nazis came to Pinkert's, counted off half of the workers standing there and marched them to the castle. They herded the victims to the brewery, turned at the bridge over the stream, and then along Zamkowa Street to the new road and the railroad station. Again the same tragedy. Mass killings. Horror and suffering at every step. Marching through the woods to the station, Rochel Toyter stepped out of line and ran into the woods. The murderers didn't notice. She got away safely and survived the war. She was the only one.

Saturday, Sept. 26, 1942

After the deportation of the Jews from the castle, there

were again many dead bodies along the way to the train. The *Chevra Kedisha* again had plenty of work. The Poles discovered a new occupation. Since there were no more Jews in the castle they took advantage of the new German order offering a pound of sugar or a bottle of whiskey to anyone who turned up a hidden Jew. They went right to work. They besieged a group of Jews in a village near Szydlowiec — among them Motl Bergman and his brother — and as soon as one of the Jews left his group for a moment they seized him and brought him to the Germans.

Finding myself near our house, I wanted to see whether anyone in our family was hiding there. I also wanted to look in at Yakov Shimon Weisbrot's house, where I knew there was a hiding-place. I never made it. On a back street, near Leybush Meir Todres's house, a firemen caught me. "Halt! Come with me!" he commanded. I reminded him that we had been classmates in the Polish school, but it didn't help. I gave him all my money and he let me go. But then another Pole stopped me and threatened to tell the police. Luckily, at that moment, the wagon transporting the Jewish labor "commando" came by. The Jewish policeman told the Pole that I belonged to this group and that he had to bring me back to the city. This Jewish policeman, Avrom Moyshe Eisenberg, thus saved my life.

In the warehouse where they put the Jewish property there was a lot of work to do, but there were only five suits of clothing there, all belonging to Shmuel Licht. Where were the rest of the suits that had been left behind in Jewish Homes? They had already been taken by the Poles who got there first.

Yankl Kuperman came from the camp at Starchowicz and proposed that we all go there, but no one wanted to take his advice.

Sunday, Sept. 27, 1942

A new German order. Anyone finding a Jew must not shoot him, but bring him to the barracks at Pinkert's. This was a piece of good news. I immediately went and hired a horse-and-wagon.

The driver was a Jew from Tomashew (Mietek's brother). We rode through Szydlowiec on Radom Street to our house. It looked like a building after a fire — all the doors and windows smashed. The rooms were stripped bare. I called out, but no one answered. The hiding-place was open, as were both cellars. I could clearly picture the tragedy that had been enacted here.

I walked over to Yakov Shimon Weisbrot's house. Here they did answer me. We walked up the stairs. A little door in the attic opened. This was the hiding-place of Melech and Milka Paris, their son Avrom Yenkl and daughter Chaya. Yakov Shimon was also there. After four days without food and water, they looked ghastly. But they were happy to see us. Unfortunately, Antek Plaskata had attached himself to us like a leech and as we were helping these people out of the attic, all the money that Mrs. Paris had hidden in her clothing fell to the ground. Plaskata snatched it up and disappeared.

That afternoon other Jews began streaming out of their hiding-places. Some walked in, others were brought in on wagons. Since we were returning from work at the time, many of them fell into the line with us and went to Pinkert's. I can still recall Rivkele Greenbaum coming out of their house and walking along with us.

Things were bad enough at Pinkert's, but we were out in the fresh air, there was water for everyone, and no one starved.

Monday, Sept. 28, 1942

Every day the crowd that gathers at Pinkert's grows a bit larger. People keep coming out of their hiding-places. Who

would ever have imagined that so many Jews would have dared to disobey a German order? It was an act of great resistance. For example, they have just brought in Nehama Lindsen, wife of the leather manufacturer Yudl Lindsen. Her appearance has changed completely. She is practically out of her mind. With her came Mrs. Leselbogen, daughter of Hershl Mendl Katz. She kept asking: "Where are my children? Where are my children?" None of her children were there.

Anyone could barter something from the Polish women who used to come to the gate to take advantage of this opportunity to get "bargains" from their erstwhile friends.

Our work is still the same. Today we went through a neighborhood called "*The Rinele*." There used to be a number of stores here. Near Antoniak's new bathhouse there was a small store packed with goods. The Poles had not yet discovered it, so we took everything to the city hall. Yitzhok Menahem's store had already been ransacked, as had Moyshe Yapok's and Hershele Chusteski's and all the others.

From there we went to Ogradowa or "Bathhouse Street." With us was Osterbach and two of the Jewish police — Alter and Israel Katz. My cousin Yenkl Milstein was in my group. We came to the home of my Uncle Yitzhok and Aunt Gitl. It had only recently been built. Inside the gate were some Poles who had come to buy the furniture. My cousin was so upset that he froze in his tracks.

At the Maslowicz place we found a large quantity of leather. We took it all to the city hall.

Tuesday, Sept. 29, 1942

Shmuel Weisbrot and his family appeared today. Also, Chaim Rosenberg and his whole family, except Shlomele, who was already in the Radom ghetto. Pinchas Steinman and his family were also brought in. In the evening, Ethel

Brandmesser, Shmuel's wife, was brought in. She asked me to go to the Polish police station, where she had hidden a package of jewelry, but we couldn't get near the place.

Wednesday, Sept. 30, 1942

The "block" at Pinkert's now looks like a small town. Every day Poles bring things to barter. Avremele Rosenzweig asked the police to go with him to his house in Szydlowiec — he had some foreign currency hidden there. I went with him. He ran up to the attic, but everything was gone.

We also went to the home of Chaya Paris and her brother Yenkl. They had hidden a fortune inside the oven. One crack of a hammer and the oven fell apart. Everything was still there. We gathered it all up. On the way back, a Pole who had been expelled from Poznan (his name was Gezetski) took many of the things from us, but what he left was still enough to sell or barter for vital necessities.

Today they brought Gitele Lederman from a bunker, also her daughter Rivke Gertner and her husband Leybush, and his brother Nathan. Gitele revived when she came into the block, but her daughter looked very weak. People said she had given birth to a child in the bunker. I don't know what happened to the child. All of them were later sent to Skarzysk, but only Leybush and Nathan were sent to Hasag, where they later perished.

Thursday, Oct. 1, 1942

Many Jews consider the announcement permitting Jews to come out of hiding as just another piece of German trickery. Pinchas Steinman and his family decided to flee to Wolonow or Starchowicz. Shmuel Weisbrot did the same. The Poles seem to be rushing too fast to buy up everything they can. Have they "smelled" a new Jewish calamity in the air?

People are growing more and more uneasy. Families stay close together. I'm staying with the Paris family. This evening Yankl Kuperman came and again urged us to escape to Starchowicz. This time several went with him. Running to Wolonow was more dangerous.

On the first day of the deportation, Elya Broitman had taken his wife and his father-in-law Shiya Gotz and started out for Wolonow. Outside the town they met a German labor supervisor. He shot them on the spot.

Friday, Oct. 2, 1942

Today is Hoshana Raba. Since early morning there has been a lot of movement in the block. People are preparing for services. We have a good cantor here — Chaim Rosenberg. The prayers have never been more heartfelt. No one knows what the day will bring. The workers go out as usual. We march out of the building, are divided up by the S.S. and go to our regular places — the movie theater, the city hall, the old cemetery. Here a new "operation" has begun — pulling the gravestones out of the ground. We don't know what they are planning to do with the stones.

Around 10 o'clock, a commotion. The fireman are lined up. Wagons are coming in from all directions. They stop at Pinkert's. The S.S.-man Karpinski comes over to our group and starts counting out the men. I am number 52, Moyshe Kuperberg is number 53. 55 is the last number of those that are to remain in the city, plus 25 of the Jewish police.

At this deportation the Jews are treated better than at the previous two. No one is shot. Older people are put on the wagons.

In addition to the remaining workers and police, a group of Jews, under German guard, goes out to collect rags and scrap metal. They wear green patches with the inscription "Useful Jews." Among them are Moyshela Kleinman, Alter Shadman,

Yankl Richter, Yitzhok Formalski, Notele Shadman and several Jews from Lodz.

No one is now permitted to enter the Pinkert building. When we returned from work that evening, the place was empty.

What to do now? What trickery did the Germans have in store for us now? We had not yet heard about the partisans. Going to a camp was a frightening thought. There was nothing to do but wait and see what fate had in store for us.

Around that time a Pole brought letters from the deported Szydlowiec in Skarzysk. Some of them had been selected for work in the ammunition factories there. I myself received a letter from the Paris family saying that Chaya and Avrom were working in one of the factories.

Saturday, Oct.3, 1942

We are marched over to the city hall by Ostrowiec, who is now commander of the Jewish police. He is not a Szydlowiec, but came from Cracow during the war. There are now only two guards over the whole town — Bauer and Karpinski. (Both of them are Folksdeutschen.) To us they look like devils out of hell. Shooting Jews is their favorite sport. They are in complete charge over us. They assign us to work places. The new work place is Chaim Bergman's recently built mill on Yastchemba Street. The Poles are surprised to see us again — they had thought they were finally rid of us.

After work we are moved to a new "home" — at Fishl the tanner's. It is more comfortable here than at Pinkert's. Fishl's tannery was a big vacant building with more room to move around. The approach to the tannery is through Zamkowa Street. On one side was Yulik's orchard; a bit further was the castle. The entrance was through a gate that was always kept locked — you had to ring a bell to get in. This is a help to us,

because whenever the two murderers arrive, we know about it immediately. It's especially helpful at night, when we often have visitors. Masha Silberstein, for example, was there a few times, dressed as a Polish girl. We gave her whatever we could. She traveled through villages and forests trying to make contact with partisans, but she never met any of them.

Bergman's mill has become the main warehouse. All the things we collect are brought there.

Monday, Oct. 5, 1942

On the way to work our group was increased by two — Avrom Moshe Davidman and his son-in-law, Gershele Fuchs, both of whom had been hiding in a bunker. When Bauer and Karpinski counted two more heads, they ordered the newcomers to step out of line. They did so. "What shall we do now?" the commander asked. "Cemetery!" Karpinski ordered, in Polish. We knew what that meant and advised the two to make a run for it. They argued, however, that they had nothing to lose, that since they hadn't been shot on the spot, there was still hope.

But it didn't end as they had hoped. That day a group of nine Szydlowiec residents arrived from Starchowicz by permission of the camp commandant. Among the nine were Zalman Shtenshliva, the son of Leybush Nissen and Hadas. Also, Yosl Rosenzweig, son of Aaron Rosenzweig, the baker. (I don't recall who the others were.) The two murderers ordered them all to line up. The Jews showed them their "passes" from the camp commandant, but it was no use. The nine men, plus the two newcomers, were led to the cemetery . . . and shot.

Moyshe Davidman's wife, who was then hiding in the rabbinical mausoleum in the cemetery, heard the shots, but was unaware that her husband and brother were among the victims.

Around the same time, a photographer with Aryan documents came into town, but the Poles recognized him and turned him in. They received their bottle of whiskey in reward.

Later, Shaya Alpert's daughter came to Szydlowiec. The murderers found her at home and became another of Bauer's victims.

The Poles reported that there was a dead woman in a house opposite Plaskata's orchard. It was Yehiel Feldman's mother, Sarah. She had been dead for quite some time.

Wednesday, Oct. 7, 1942

The latest news is that the Jewish apothecary Goldzamd has been arrested and is being kept in the Polish jail. His store was on Radomska Street, in the home of Shaya Alpert. His brother-in-law Kuba was with us. (I don't recall his last name.) Kuba had something to do with the police. Neither of them was born in Szydlowiec, but settled there some time before the war. Kuba appealed to the commander of the Jewish police to save his brother-in-law. In return, he would divulge the location of a large hiding-place with a fortune in goods. The Jewish police reported this to their superiors and murderers agreed. They went to the place with horses and wagons; it was at # 2 on the synagogue street, in a house that belonged to the Silbermans.

In front was the store; underneath the building was a deep cellar that had been lined with tin. Inside the cellar was dry goods, woolens, fur coats, bags of thread, finished suits of clothing, and many other valuable articles. It was so skillfully constructed that the goods could have stayed there for years without damage. There was even an opening for air. The hiding-place was the work of Mendl Meyerfeld.

All the goods were taken out and carted to Yuzef Podkovinski's restaurant. Then Goldzamd was released, but

had to leave the city immediately. It was considered a worthwhile exchange, since a Jewish life was saved.

Working at the theater warehouse, I went out into the street for a few minutes and noticed that Feyga Goldband, Hersh David's daughter, was standing nearby. "Where did you come from?" I asked her. She pointed to the new cemetery, where she and other Jews were hiding. I advised her to hide in Shlome Eisenberg's courtyard for the time being, because Bauer and Karpinski were in the warehouse at that time. (They used to check there every night to see if anyone was there "illegally".)

The next day, transporting goods from the theater to Bergman's warehouse, a Pole stopped me and asked me where he could find Jews in the neighborhood. He was the son of a Polish nobleman who lived in Gazdkew. Bauer happened to notice this. He ran over and shoved the young man off his motorcycle. Luckily he didn't ask me about the conversation. Later I learned that the young man's parents were hiding Joseph Mendelson, who wanted to come into the city but didn't know where to find us. He wasn't even sure there were any Jews left in Szydlowiec.

Friday, Oct. 9, 1942

Another difficult problem has arisen: two of our workers, Moyshe Briks and Motek Milstein (a grandson of Leah Zislis Gershonovitz) went out for several hours and fell into the hands of the Polish police. With them was Abraham Weisbrot, who had been hiding in the home of a Christian woman. Now the same tactic had to be applied as in the case of Goldzamd. Leybush Briks and one of our workers tried by every means to save the men, but where could they find another hidden store of goods to ransom the three lives?

It turned out that Yosl Broitman did know of such a place;

his neighbor, Pinchas Meyer Milgrom, on Radom Street, opposite Leybush Warshawsky the tailor's. Ostrowiecz "negotiated" this successfully with Bauer and Karpinski. We immediately drove wagons up to the place. There we found a quantity of dry goods and many pieces of white linen. Again it was worth it: three Jewish lives ransomed. The rescuers, Yosl Broitman and Leybush Briks, later perished in the Hasag. Motek was shot while trying to escape. Abraham Weisbrot and Moyshe Briks survived the war.

Around that time some Poles reported to the Germans that Jews were hiding in the synagogue. Bauer ran over there, but found no one. (They had fled in time.) He also heard that Jews were hiding in the "Ludavniye." Zelig the chauffeur's parents had actually been hiding there, but fortunately Bauer came too late.

Sunday, Oct. 11, 1942

We learned that some people working at the cemetery had seen Jews hiding there in a mausoleum. They helped them in whatever way they could, but some Poles got wind of it and reported it to the police. When we returned to our barracks we already found all those who had been hiding in the cemetery: Rochel (wife of Avrom Moyshe Davidman) and her two little girls; Berl Tempel, Feyga Goldband and Lazar Sherrs (five years old). Berl Tempel, a Hassid of Bialobzeg, would eat only bread and water. They stayed with us several days. We thought that since they hadn't been shot when they were found, they might be allowed to join our work group, but a few days later the Nazis took them back to the cemetery and killed them all.

Joseph Mendelson and Hershl Lederman have attached themselves to our group. We never learned how this was arranged, but it worked, and they survived the war.

Masha Silberstein has visited us again. She has still not found any trace of partisans. Again we gave her whatever supplies we could and she left.

Wednesday, Oct. 14, 1942

The regular Wednesday fair is being held, but without Jews. A sudden commotion. A peasant has found a small boy in the street. It is Shmulik Brandmesser's son. His father had paid a Polish peasant a large sum of money to keep the child hidden, but the man had brought the boy to the fair. The child was taken to city hall. The murderers ordered Notte Broitman, one of our work group, to carry the child to the cemetery. There Karpinski shot him.

Reuben Shadman came from another camp to see his brother Notele. As he was leaving our barracks, the murderers were entering the gate. Reuben tried to escape, but they caught him. Bauer demanded "Where is Morro?" They called Yitzhok Morro. Bauer stormed at him: "Are you a Jew or a Pole?" It seems that some Poles had accused him of wandering around the streets pretending to be Polish. Through the intervention of Commander Ostrowiec and other police, Bauer was pacified, and Isaac Morro was saved from certain death.

Friday, Oct. 16, 1942

The S.S. summoned the two tailors in our group — Avrom Weisbrot and myself — and ordered us to collect bed-sheets and large tablecloths and make square napkins out of them. We had no sewing-machines in the place, so they permitted us to go into the home of a Pole who lived near Bergman's mill. When we entered this house we were surprised to find Notte Kuperberg and his wife there. What were they doing here, so close to the murderers? Their reply was almost apathetic —

they had nothing more to lose. (I don't know what happened to them afterward.)

Bauer happened to be in a good mood. He asked if there was anyone among us who could sing. Yehiel Honigman obliged him with a sad Polish song about a mother and her child. Bauer said the song had moved him to tears. I wanted to ask him: "Murderer! How many Jewish mothers and children have you killed with your own hands?"

Tuesday, Oct. 20, 1942

Some Poles came into Bergman's warehouse and informed the Germans that they had seen Notte Shadman and Yankel Richter near the church. Bauer drove over on his motorcycle at once. He shot Notte and Yankel on the spot.

Masha Silberstein has stopped coming to our block. Who knows what happened to her?

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 1942

They did not take us out to work today. After the rollcall at the city hall we were marched into the center of town. Each one of us was given a broom and ordered to start cleaning the streets. I was assigned the area from the "bodns" to Plaskato's orchard. The houses are desolate. On the entire street there are only two families, a former worker of Shiya Opatowski's, who took over the bakery, and a Pole who was expelled from Posen.

I was already in the middle of the street with my broom, standing outside our house at 97 Radomska. I wanted to go inside, but couldn't get myself to do it. Tears flowed down my cheeks. Here my cradle had stood. Here I had spent a happy childhood in the bosom of my family. From this house my mother and my father were deported. They were models of goodness and honesty. From here my sister Tsipporah and her

husband, Chaim Katz, were deported with their children — Yakov Yitzhok, Shmuel, Nechamele, Leahele and Estherl; also my younger sister Freydl and her child Hershele, barely two years old, and my beloved Grandmother Gitl.

Thus ended our last work day in Szydlowiec. That night several men in our group ran away: Shlomo Tepper, Avrom Genya, Avrom Verman (the best shoemaker in the town), and Joseph Mendelson, the only one who survived.

Carrying Aryan documents, Isaac Morro, Nathan Stark and Tyemek (from Tomaszow) left the city.

Several of our group went into the forest: Pinchas Meir Greenberg, Moyshe and Hershl Tsingiser, Avrom Draynodel, Itche Richter (he had left earlier) and Shmulik Brandmesser. Whether they ever made contact with partisans, I don't know.

Wednesday, Nov. 11, 1942

This morning we got up as usual and ate breakfast. Two trucks are already standing outside the gate, guarded by Ukrainians from the Hasag camp. This tells us plainly where we are going. Better that way. We had feared that after work today we would all be liquidated.

Our two bosses came and gave us two hours to get ready. In place of those who had escaped came Yankl Draynodel. His brother Yeheskel had been with us all along, but had been hiding. We all got into the trucks. This time they overlooked the rollcall.

The trucks move slowly. The gate on Fishl's tannery recedes. Gradually our whole shtetl disappears from view, as in a dream.

Left behind in Szydlowiec were only those who worked as "Useful Jews" — Itzik Formalski, Moyshe Kleinman, Alter Shadman and a few others from Lodz. I do not know what happened to them.

Later we learned that the Zucker brothers were hiding in the village of Wysocki. A few Jews had been hiding in the cellar of the castle, but not for long. All of them were found — and shot.

My Uncle Boruch and his two boys, 8 and 5 years old, were still hiding in the village of Skzenczin. Jagelo, the Pole who hid them, later died in Auschwitz. My uncle was shot in 1943. My two cousins, Yakov Yitzhok and Bronek, survived the war.

* * *

Each day, when we marched through the streets of the town, we could notice things changing. Houses disappeared, as after an earthquake. Peasants from the nearby villages brought Jewish houses from the S.S., took them apart and brought the materials into the villages to build homes for themselves. They had another calculation: maybe they would find Jewish valuables in the walls or in other hiding-places . . .

For us, a whole world was destroyed.

A GHETTO WITHOUT BARBED WIRE

by Abraham Finkler

The cry "Jews, the synagogue is burning!" echoed through the streets of Szydlowiec in the middle of the night in early 1940. In an instant the whole town stood around the burning building not knowing what to do. The Polish firemen did not appear . . . Several Jews, led by Zisha Weisbrot, risking their lives, ran into the synagogue, brought out a few of the *Sefer Torahs*. Everything else went up in flames.

Before very long, the deputy District commissioner in Radom, a man named Kerkliś, appeared with a squad of uniformed Germans. "Where is the Jewish Council," he was yelling. "Why have the Jews set fire to their house of worship? *Donnerwetter*, I'll have you all shot!"

According to the neighbors across from the synagogue, several uniformed Germans had entered the synagogue a half hour prior to the fire, stayed there five or ten minutes and then driven away in a car. A few minutes later the whole building was in flames.

Very quickly all the Jewish Council members gathered in the large meeting-room of the city hall. Kerkliś, flanked by two soldiers, was declaring at the top of his voice that he would not tolerate this kind of thing in his district — people burning down their own house of worship — and then the whole world would write that the Germans had done it and thus besmirch the good name of the German people. Shmuel Silberstein, a Jewish Council member, tried to ask him a question, but Kerkliś stormed over to him with clenched fists and ordered him to shut his mouth.

The result was that all the members of the Jewish Council signed an "affidavit" (already prepared) stating that "Jews burned down the synagogue" but that the exact identity of the culprit was unknown. At the end of the meeting Kerkliś "appealed" to the Council to turn over all prayerbooks and minute-books older than a hundred years; also old spice boxes, silver candelabra, etc., because these were museum pieces that should be kept under guard and thus would not be destroyed in such fires. They promised to do so.

City Without a Ghetto

Szydlowiec was one of the few cities in Poland (and Eastern Europe generally) whose Jews were not locked into an

area surrounded by barbed wire during the Hitler occupation. At the end of 1941 we heard that the Nazis were planning to set up a ghetto in Szydlowiec. The Judenrat was ordered to "resettle" all the Jews in an area that was one-fourth the size of the city. The area they had chosen was the poorest part of town. According to a map they had drawn up, this ghetto was to start at the marketplace, including Bazniczne and Rabinowa Streets and the street leading to Radom Road; also Redlich's button factory.

This news hit the Jewish Council like a thunderbolt. It was frightening to imagine ten thousand Jews crowded into a fourth of the city. It would have meant that three and four families would have had to live in one home. To avoid panic, the Judenrat kept this order secret and set about trying to get this order countermanded.

A delegation went to the district governor. (His name was Lolein.) It consisted of Yerakhmiel Morgenbesser, Michal Rosenbaum and myself. Lolein was somewhat accessible to us. He had a certain amount of humanity in him. He loved music and art. He had always listened patiently to our grievances. It was not easy, however, to get in to see him, because all current Jewish matters were handled by Kerklis, a Lithuanian and a pathological anti-Semite. All the Jewish Councils in the Radom district were deathly afraid of what he might do. We took advantage of an opportunity when he was not present and were received by the governor himself.

The delegation simply wept copious tears. We felt that he was listening. We told him that we were already too crowded, what with 2500 refugees from Plock and other places sent to us by the Third Reich, that we had no choice but to accept them and settle them in various Jewish homes. We reminded him that there was a typhus epidemic in the city that was claiming scores of lives every day, and that if we packed still more people into the already crowded quarters, the contagious

disease was likely to endanger not only Szydlowiec but the entire district.

Lolein assured us that he would do everything possible to have the order revoked and we left his office feeling a little better.

We then went to see Dr. Chimiengo, the district physician. He had often helped us when he came to Szydlowiec with Kerklis and Lt. Frost on their routine hygienic inspections. Of Ukrainian descent, Dr. Chimiengo served the German authorities, but at the same time did Jews a lot of favors. The day before the deportation he hid Dr. Leybush Dimont and his wife Carole and their son. Dr. Dimont was killed when the Gestapo found him on Dr. Chimiengo's farm. His wife and son escaped and are now living in Paris. Dr. Chimiengo himself was arrested for hiding Jews and sent to Auschwitz. After the war we met in Lodz, where he showed me a certificate from the camp administration at Auschwitz.

We also went to see the district commissioner of Jewish affairs, who promised to send the governor a satisfactory report about Szydlowiec.

But the person who did the most to annul the ghetto decree was "Madame X." She was Governor Lasch's mistress and it was she who persuaded him to allow the Jews in Szydlowiec to remain in their homes. The official version was that a ghetto was indeed being established in Szydlowiec — but the ghetto boundaries included all of Szydlowiec.

When we heard about this decision, it was our joy that knew no bounds . . .

Madame X, of course, did not do this merely for a share in the world-to-come. Not long afterward, Yerakhmiel Morgenbesser and Michal Rosenbaum stepped into a military limousine with Madame X, accompanied by two policemen, and drove to the Warsaw ghetto. During a ten-day period they bought up the most beautiful and expensive jewelry and

watches, as well as men's and women's fur coats. Morgenbesser and Rosenbaum stayed in the ghetto during that time. Madame X and the two policemen drove into the ghetto every day to try on the coats and to appraise the jewelry.

I don't think that people who didn't live through that *danse macabre* themselves can really imagine what it meant to get a decree of the Hitlerite authorities revoked.

For this extraordinary achievement and for similar daring activities which representatives of Szydlowiec Jewry overtook, credit must go to two people — Abraham Rosenbaum and Pinchas Shteinman. Although they personally never went to see the various German officials in Radom and actually never met them face-to-face (except when they invited various Gestapo officials into Rosenbaum's home "for a drink"), they had a tremendous influence in convincing the three "traveling representatives" to try every possible means and that it was worth taking all sorts of risks, if there was the slightest change of helping the Jews of Szydlowiec. More often than not they were correct.

More than once, when I felt we were walking straight into the lion's mouth, Pinchas Shteinman, a devout Hassid, would say to me:

"What would your grandfather, the Radoshitzer rebbe, or your father, the Radoshitzer *rov*, have done in order to save just one Jewish life? Here the life of a whole community of Jews is in jeopardy, including your own family."

Like a magic wand, these and similar words would make me less fearful of entering the private homes of high Nazi officials that were always heavily guarded by the Security Services, of whom they themselves were afraid.

The encouraging words of Avrom Rosenbaum and Pinchas Shteinman, the thought that we could help Jews in such a terrible time and improve our "communications" with lower

and higher officials in the German apparatus — all that saved us from more than one calamity. For example:

During one of the unexpected roundups in 1941 the Ukrainian *Werkschutz* from Skarzysko, led by an S.S. *Sturmfuehrer*, came to Szydlowiec and rounded up young Jews for the “Hasag” ammunition factory. Two big trucks drove up to the Catholic church and waited for victims. We immediately called our “contacts” in the Radom Labor Control Office on the telephone and asked them not to permit our people to be taken to another labor district because we ourselves were suffering from a shortage of hands. They asked us to put one of the German officials on the line, so they could give him the order directly. This time we were lucky. By chance, a gendarme patrol, headed by a fat German guard whom we called “Der Tatte,” was riding through. We brought him to the phone and it was he who got the order from the labor office not to permit even one worker to be transported out of Szydlowiec.

Meanwhile the two big trucks had been filled, ready to start out for Skarzysko. The chief guard then asked the S.S.-man in charge to show him the order from the Radom labor office permitting him to take workers out of the city. Since the S.S.-man had no such order, “der Tatte” overruled him and the Jews were released.

Such “miracles” happened now and then. But the greatest one was getting the Germans to allow Szydlowiec to remain without a ghetto. Who knows how many Szydlowiec Jews owe their lives to this miraculous circumstance.

* * *

German troops marched into Szydlowiec in September 1939. I was then on the way to Warsaw, with the idea of crossing the Vistula. I wanted to put as much distance as possible between myself and the Germans. They caught up

with us, however, on the other side of Radom and arrested all the men. The women and children were permitted to go back to Szydlowiec. I was with several Jews from Radom and Szydlowiec, among whom were Abraham Redlich, head of the Szydlowiec kehilla. A couple of thousand non-Jews and about a hundred Jews had lined up to register. When the Germans noticed that I had a pretty good command of their language, they kept me there as interpreter. My supervisor asked me what my nationality was. "Jewish," I answered. "*Jude*, you're lost for eternity," he said, and that was my "official" reception.

From there they took us directly to the prison at Kielce, where we stayed for three days without food. Then they took the Jewish prisoners to the Great Synagogue, registered our names and sent each man back to his own city, on condition that he report to the local military command.

At that time there was already a military command in Szydlowiec headed by a man name Rose, who had made a good impression on the population, an illusion which didn't last very long. One morning Mayor Zulkowski ordered the "leading Jews," including the rabbis, to report to the city hall in one hour. There he introduced to us the head of the Radom Gestapo, Major Fuchs, and his two aides. I had been secretary of the kehillah for a few years and was therefore one of the "invited guests." Fuchs told us briefly and bluntly: It was the Jews who had started this war and it was they who were responsible for the boycott of German goods, so he was levying a tax on the Jewish population of Szydlowiec in the sum of 50,000 zloty, a fantastic sum in those days. Further, the money had to be raised in eight days.

This announcement drained the color out of our faces and cut off our tongues. Only the president of the kehillah, Abraham Redlich, managed to ask a question, but almost simultaneously Major Fuchs rushed over to us and screamed "*Heraus!*" We barely made it to the door.

That same evening the Jewish Council held an emergency meeting in the Amshinover shtibl, which had been built by the Steinman family. We sat down to draw the "taxpaper" list. Rabbi Chaim Rabinowitch stayed with us all night. Yehiel Zucker, who knew everyone in Szydlowiec, drew up the list of contributors. It was dawn before we reached the required sum, almost time to start the morning service. We prayed that day with intense devotion, and at the words "*oshamnu, bogadnu*" we beat our breasts in a silent entreaty that we would be able to raise that tremendous sum of money in such a short time.

When I asked Commandant Rose for a little more time, he replied that he had nothing to do with Gestapo. But he grabbed his head and protested, "My God, what crime have the Jews of Szydlowiec committed that they must now pay a fine for it?"

Precisely on time we stood at the entrance to the Gestapo office in Radom with a valise full of Polish banknotes, money we had extracted from people who didn't know what sins they were paying for. The delegation consisted of Yerakhmiel Morgenbesser (at that time still Vice President of the kehillah), Michal Rosenbaum and myself as secretary.

Major Fuchs kindly agreed to accept the 50,000 zloty.

The Judenrat Tries to Reach the Murderers

Fate decreed that the first Jewish victim in the ghetto should be an innocent 10-year-old boy, Samek Redlich, son of the head of the kehilla and later Chairman of the Judenrat. It happened this way. Abraham Redlich, the owner of a button factory, owed taxes to the "Sick Fund." The manager of the local Sick Fund, a Pole who came to collect, decided he was not getting enough money, so he confiscated various things in the factory and in Redlich's home. One of the items was a camera that little Samek was playing with. The child refused to give it up. No one paid attention to the incident and it was

forgotten. The Pole, however, had written in his report to Radom that the boy had interfered with him in the carrying out of his official duties and that he had even cursed the Poles and the Germans. A few days later several Gestapo-men drove up to the house and picked up the boy.

The Jewish population was aghast at the implications of this act. Suddenly we clearly understood that if we were going to be exposed to the death penalty by every denunciation by a Pole, then none of us had the slightest possibility of surviving the war. We did everything we could think of. We traveled to Radom scores of times to speak to the Jewish Council there. We offered huge sums of money. But to no avail. They kept giving us excuses that the child was being questioned, that it wouldn't take much longer, that he would soon be coming home, etc., etc. By accident a Gestapo-man revealed to us that Samek had been killed in the dungeons of the Gestapo.

This tragic episode convinced us that we had to find ways to get to know the heads of the various political, administrative and police offices in Radom, so that we could intervene immediately in such cases. To do this, two things were necessary — large amounts of money and people who were willing to risk their lives in preoffering such “gifts” to the right officials.

At an emergency meeting of all its 16 members the Judenrat asked for volunteers for this highly secret work. The only volunteers were Yerakhmiel Morgenbesser, Abraham Rosenbaum and Pinchas Shteinman. They became the triumverate that later planned all the strategic undertakings in the ghetto.

At that meeting the Council also decided that Morgenbesser, Michal Rosenbaum and A. Finkler would be the ones to travel to Radom to contact the relevant German authorities. They were given full authority to act and they were to report only to the “triumverate.” Each delegation would

consist of only two people, and either Morgenbesser or Finkler must always stay in Szydlowiec to handle emergencies. This decision was a secret one and all the Judenrat members swore not to speak about it to anyone.

Day in, day out, the "travelers" left for Radom early in the morning and returned late at night. They established relationships with very important persons in government positions there. They were so successful that when a member of the Jewish Council in Radom was arrested, its Chairman, Diamond, sent people to Szydlowiec with a request for help in saving that individual.

These daily interventions swallowed up enormous sums of money and valuable gifts, such as fur coats, jewels, etc. It was impossible to increase the already oppressive taxes on the Jewish population. The Judenrat itself had a large administrative apparatus employing scores of officials for labor, provisions, hospital, an isolation ward, social insurance, post office, Jewish police, a court. The cemetery required a larger apparatus because of the addition of refugees from other cities. Szydlowiec was known as the "city of refuge" where Jews could hide under assumed names without having to register, because the Szydlowiec Judenrat, in its monthly reports to the political section of the Gestapo, never submitted the correct figures on "immigrants" or "emigrants."

The Council therefore decided that it must have a source of funds to provide for all these departments, the most important of which was the maintenance of its contacts with the Germans. Fortunately we were able to establish a "relationship" with the heads of the Traffic Department in Radom, which was empowered to issue permits for Jews (in exceptional cases) to travel by train in Poland. Up until that time the Judenrat in Radom had had the exclusive right to do this. When we received the first shipment of permits, the Council in Radom objected strenuously, but Governor Lasch

decreed that the Szydlowiec Jewish Council could also exercise its right in exceptional cases.

The result was that from all corners of the German occupied areas in Poland Jews appealed to us for travel permits. We were able to handle on this quite efficiently. Jews used these permits to travel on business to Warsaw, Krakow, etc. The Szydlowiec kehillah received a great deal of income from this and was thus able to distribute money left and right the “murderers in white gloves” in order to save Jewish lives.

* * *

Gestapo Demands Names of Jewish Political Leaders

One day the Mayor’s “Polish Administrator” came into the Judenrat office with an order from the Gestapo: the Jewish Council must report in his office in 20 minutes.

A few minutes before the scheduled time the entire Council was present in the large room of the city hall. Waiting for them was a tall, heavy Gestapo-man with blood-red cheeks. He came right to the point. “I am Major Post.” The name was synonymous with terror in those days. It was he who had sent out the first victim from among the Radom Jewish Council members, the son of Avremele Goldberg (a well-known shoe manufacturer) to the the camp at Gross-Rosen.

Major Post read us a document ordering the Judenrat to supply within 24 hours a complete list of the leaders of local political parties, as well as of known thieves and other “criminal types.” The Council members knew the dread significance of this; they had already seen what happened to the political leaders in Radom after the Jewish Council there had provided such a list.

One hour later the entire Judenrat gathered for an emergency meeting. It was one of the most tragic and stormy meetings I have ever attended. The main question was: Do

Jews have a right to send other Jews to death in order to save their own lives? The Council was made up of people from various parties and movements: Hassidim, Zionists, wealthy men, Bundists, others. The members made fiery speeches, took positions on the fundamental question: Does the Council have the right to make decisions on matters of "who shall live and who shall die."

The most powerful speech was made by Pinchas Shteinman, a merchant, a Hassid, a progressive person with a healthy sense of justice. The essence of his speech was this: Today they are demanding that we be the Angel of Death for our own brothers here in Szydlowiec. Tomorrow they will demand a list of our children. Will we do that too, in order to save our own skin? Will you be ready to die with a clear conscience if you do this? If I cannot say with a clear conscience — "My hands have not shed this blood," then it is better that I die now, while my conscience is still clear, and let there be an end to this spiritual and physical agony and degradation.

The effect of his words was so moving that all the Council members — even those who had previously held the opposite view — voted as one: We will die rather than submit. The meeting lasted five hours.

At the end of 24 hours Major Post arrested the entire Judenrat and locked them up in the city jail. Two days later he appeared again at the office of the Judenrat. First he raved and ranted about the office being dirty and chaotic. I explained that the work of the Council was now paralyzed, since every Council member was in charge of a department, and in his absence the work stops. It was therefore extremely important, I suggested, that all the Council members be released and given time to reconsider their decision. My hope was that as long as they weren't sent to Radom we might be able to work out some kind of compromise with Major Post.

Apparently my suggestion made an impression on him. He took me over to the city hall and ordered the Judenrat members released, but first he made a long speech to me: Nothing would happen to the people on the list. It was only a matter of keeping an eye on them, so they wouldn't engage in political or criminal activity. He was going to leave now, he said, and when he returned, he expected to find the lists of names waiting for him on the table, otherwise the Council members would not be released.

I showed him my passport and explained that I was not a native of Szydlowiec and that I knew hardly anyone here. I also asked him if there was anything he needed but had not been able to find here. He thought for a moment and then he said, "Man, if you could get me a horse, I'll pay whatever it costs but it must be the best."

I promised to fulfill his request, although at that moment I didn't know how we could "fill his order" when every horse was now registered and had a brand-mark on it. But knowing that this Angel of Death needed something from his victims meant that Jewish lives might be saved after all, and this gave me hope and courage.

As soon as Major Post left I ran to tell the Council members what had happened. They immediately sent for several Jewish horse-traders and horse experts. They appraised them of the danger that confronted the Jews of Szydlowiec, particularly the Council. Whereupon Abraham Shadman volunteered to carry out his task. He assured us that he knew where he could get such a horse (naturally, for a large sum of money), but he was afraid to bring it into the city. The Council assured him that nothing would happen to him. All he had to do was get it into the courtyard of the Judenrat building.

It didn't take very long. Shadman brought the horse into Szydlowiec. The Polish police seized it immediately for not

having a brand-mark. He told them who it was for. They retreated without another word.

That same day Michal Rosenbaum and I rode to Radom in a buggy with the horse tied to the back. Along the road, Germans from various military formations stopped us and peppered us with questions about the horse, but as soon as they heard it was for *Sicherheitsdienst* and for Major Post personally, all their curiosity vanished.

Late in the afternoon we brought the horse to the Gestapo gate and reported to Major Post. He came out at once, took one look at the animal, and amazingly his face changed expression. A pleasant smile covered his mug. It was no longer the same man. He patted the horses flanks so tenderly that I couldn't help but wonder how a man could have such humane instincts for a beast and such beastly instincts toward humans.

We stood there and waited. How would this Gestapo Angel of Death thank us for this precious gift? But the only thing that came out of his mouth was: "Godamn Jews, they have everything!" Then he motioned us into his office and handed us a receipt stipulating that he had bought and paid for the horse. We signed it. In a burst of good feeling he even gave us a whole zloty for the ride home.

But he never again mentioned the lists of political leaders, thieves and criminal types in Szydlowiec.

* * *

I want to add only one thing to the story of this tragic episode. I don't know whether all the *landsleit*, or just ordinary readers, especially those who did not live through the Hitler *gehenem* themselves, can ever imagine the fateful and enormous responsibility that lay on the shoulders of Jewish Council leaders working under the muzzle of the Nazi gun. Who can comprehend the deep inner struggles of a Jewish Council member who wanted to remain in harmony with his

conscience? As an example of this, and in connection with Pinchas Shteinman's role at that secret meeting of the Council, I feel I must say a word here about that honorable man.

After the first deportation, Shteinman and his family were sent to the labor camp at Wolanow near Radom. When the Nazis announced that four new ghettos were being established and that one of them was Szydlowiec, he decided to go back home. I could not convince him that this might be only a trap. He told me that rather than allow himself to be stepped on by every pig and let his blood be drained one drop at a time, he preferred to go "straight into the oven and let there be an end to it." He and his wife perished during the second deportation to Treblinka.

400 Jews Rescued from Janiczew

Every day we received terrifying news from the labor camp at Janiczew near Lublin, to which several hundred young Jews from Szydlowiec had been taken. The work there had to do with water improvement. The living conditions were unbearable, the food was bad, they slept on the ground on beds of straw and the work norms were impossible to fulfill.

One evening the parents of the deported youngsters stormed the Judenrat offices. Weeping and screaming they compelled the Council to take up the matter immediately. At a meeting of the entire Council it was decided to delegate two members, Dr. Leybush Dimont and Aaron Sharfhartz, along with the Secretary, to see what could be done about it. We were warned at the outset that Lublin had become a dangerous place for Jewish Council members from other cities — the S.S. had orders to arrest them on sight and sent them to Belzec.

We went first to Radom, the labor office of our district. We had decided to try to get from them an official letter releasing the Szydlowiec Jews from the camp, on the basis that Szydlowiec was outside the Lublin district. The response to

that, however, was that they had no jurisdiction to make such proposals; that such a decision could be made only by the Labor Department of the Governor's office in Lublin, with the agreement of the S.S. chief there, a man named Globatznik.

We bought this unpleasant news back to the Judenrat, which decided nonetheless to continue its efforts to get out children out of Janiczew. That same evening we were supposed to take a train to Lublin, but Dr. Dimont suddenly became ill. The delegation thus consisted only of Shafthartz and myself. One of the leaders of the Zionist organization in Szydlowiec, Aaron was a fine, sensitive young man from a Hassidic family.

When we arrived in Lublin the next morning, I went straight to my cousin Moshe Rabinowicz (a son of the Rabbi of Suchedniew and a son-in-law of the Rebbe of Skerniewic). He received me very warmly. Aaron stayed with a friend, not far from my cousin's house.

In Lublin the Nazis conducted daily roundups of Jews for labor camps. It was very difficult for strangers to stay hidden very long, but it was necessary for us to move about. So after two days of anxiety, Aaron decided to return to Szydlowiec and I was left alone to carry out this mission.

By various subterfuges I finally got in to see Dr. Hecht, chief of the Labor Department. I presented the problem to him. The Jewish workers in Janiczew must be sent home, because there was urgent and important work for them to do in Szydlowiec. With my heart pounding I asked him for his home address. When he gave it to me without any questions, I felt a little calmer. That same evening I visited him at his home. He instructed me to see him again the next morning in his office.

That night, however, the local S.S. carried out a major roundup of Jews for Maidanek. I had fallen sound asleep. My cousin woke me and then took his family up to the attic through a hidden passageway behind a bookcase. I was unable to follow them because the front door had already been broken

down by two S.S.-men, who grabbed me by the throat and started dragging me out. I barely managed to show them my documents from the Governor of Radom, but they paid no attention. One of them swung his rifle at me, but I ran out to the truck that was waiting in the street below.

By that time the truck was already filled. They took us to a large square near the S.S. headquarters, then unloaded the truck of its human cargo, beating people unmercifully. All night we stood there in the cold. At 9:30 in the morning Globatznik and his men arrived, accompanied by a pack of dogs. Simultaneously, large trucks drove up to transport the two-three thousand Jews who had already lined up, holding their passes in their hands. The S.S.-men didn't even look at them; they merely kept yelling "Forward!" When they came to me, I shouted at the top of my voice that I was there on Dr. Hecht's order. The name "Dr. Hecht" had the desired effect. One of the S.S.-men turned to me, examined my papers and pulled me out of line. To make sure I was telling the truth he ordered another S.S.-man to make a telephone call. Fifteen minutes later he led me over to the gate and yelled: "Disappear!"

When I finally got back to my cousin's house, everyone embraced me and bombarded me with questions: How did it happen and why did they let me go?

Two o'clock that afternoon I reported at Dr. Hecht's office. He already knew about my arrest and my release. The documents ordering Szydlowiec workers freed were already prepared. My name was listed as the transport leader from Janiczew to Szydlowiec. I asked Dr. Hecht to send an S.S.-guard with me to Janiczew — at my expense. He agreed.

When we arrived at Janiczew, my guard handed Dr. Hecht's order to the head of the camp. Later I found an opportunity to ask the camp chief to telephone someone in Juzefow who could arrange for trains to transport the 400

workers to Szydlowiec. Sunday at dawn he accompanied us to the station at Juzefow and turned the documents back to me.

The joy of the youngsters unexpectedly released from the camp was beyond description. Sunday evening the whole Jewish population of Szydlowiec, including the Judenrat, was waiting at the city hall. The reunion between parents and their children was heart-rending. I looked around at the young people — all of them had once been my students. Now they were tattered and barefoot, their faces drawn and gloomy, almost unrecognizable. Involuntarily the cry of Rabbi Levi Yitzhok of Berditchev tore out of my lips:

“God in heaven! Why are you doing this to your people Israel?”

Alter Freedman in the Hands of the Gestapo

One Saturday morning, more dead than alive, Yerakhmiel Morgenbesser fell into the Bialobzeger shtibl to bring me the news that the Gestapo had arrested Alter Freedman and was beating him in the Polish police station. S.S.-man Erdmann refused to talk with anyone about it. Since he had very often come to the Judenrat during the last two years to “buy” all his “accouterments,” and since I had been involved with this, Yerakhmiel asked me to try to talk to him.

The arrest of Alter Freedman had upset everyone in Szydlowiec. Alter was a teacher, a scholar, a man of erudition, a simple and righteous man who did not concern himself with worldly things. He had his own ideas about the meaningless life of this world, and no one could ever convince him otherwise.

On the day of the deportation I remember running around half-crazy, looking for my wife and child, and I happened to bump into Alter on Radom Street. He was dressed in his somber black overcoat underneath it I could see his long white Yom Kippur kitl. I asked him where he was running to with that kitl on him. Very simple he told me: “I know the Evil

is going to kill us, so I'm running to the mikveh to cleanse myself before I enter the next world."

And now this kind of Jew was in the hands of murderers. Within a few minutes, Morgenbesser and I were on our way to the police station. When we got there, Abraham Rosenbaum was already waiting for us. The three of us went into the station-house.

Erdmann came out to greet us with his fists waving. "None of your thievish tricks will help you now!" he screamed. "That goddamn Jew insulted the German people and the Fuehrer!"

He was really frightening. It took us a while to calm this raving Gestaponik down enough so he could at least tell us why they had arrested Alter Freedman.

Two German soldiers had come into his hardware store and asked him for a couple of boxes of nails. Instead of money, they paid him with a chit. He threw the piece of paper to the ground and started cursing them — the Germans had already bankrupted him, he had a drawerful of these chits which weren't worth the paper they were printed on. And so on.

As he finished, Erdmann leaped from his chair with such an outcry that sparks flew from his mouth.

"Well, what do you have to say now? This one is going to have his head cut off, I can assure you of that!"

Somehow we managed to persuade him to allow us to see Alter. We also asked him to stop the Gestapo from beating the prisoner. When he opened the door of an adjoining room, Alter was lying on the floor, trying to cover his bare head with his hands. As soon as he saw us he got up and ran over to us. His first words were: "Yerakhmiel! Avrom! Why did you take away my yarmulka? Where is my yarmulke?"

His face was white as a wall. Blood ran from his mouth, his head, his nose. He kept his hands on his head — that's all he seemed to be concerned about . . .

We assured him that he would get the yarmulke back and that we would do everything possible to free him. In our hearts, however, we had very little hope of prying him loose from the claws of the Angel of Death. When they started taking him away he begged us to ask them not to do it on the Sabbath but to wait at least until after Havdalah . . .

An hour later, Rakhmiel and I were already in a carriage going to Radom. From experience we knew that whatever we could do had to be done immediately — tomorrow would be too late.

In Radom we telephoned Madame X. She was beautiful, blond German women, about 21, bright, intelligent and well educated. She was married to a high-placed German in the Radom government, but was also Governor Lasch's mistress. For Szydlowiec she performed miracles.

We told her the story in brief. We explained that Alter Freeman didn't speak German, that the soldiers simply had not understood what he was saying. The whole thing was a terrible misunderstanding. She told us that the following day she was having a big birthday party to which the cream of the city's society had been invited, as well as the *sicherheitsdienst*. She promised to do the best she could, but that we were not to phone her until Monday morning.

The story spread quickly through Radom. The leaders of the Jewish Council there "consoled" us with the comment that if we got out of this with only one victim we could have to raise our hands to heaven in a prayer of thanksgiving. They themselves refused to lift a finger, however, to help us in this matter.

Several days of great anxiety and tension followed as Madame X kept telling us: "Tomorrow, perhaps." We didn't want to go back home emptyhanded. Finally — it was Wednesday afternoon — we heard the good news over the

telephone: tomorrow at three o'clock, Alter Freeman would be released.

The tension reached its culmination on Thursday at three as we watched the gate open and a human lump rolled out into the street as if someone had just kicked it. When Alter caught sight of us he began running toward us with his silk yarmulke on his head. "Where can I get a *tallis* and *tefillin*?" he pleaded.

When we brought him back to Szydlowiec, the whole town was waiting for us.

* * *

I must add a word here about "Madame X." This German woman performed extraordinary services for the Jews in Szydlowiec under Nazi occupation. In 1946, after the war, I met her in Germany. Today she occupies a high position in the German government apparatus. To my great regret, I still cannot reveal her real name. She was afraid it might hurt her career. Perhaps in time, when she is no longer afraid of her former wartime friends, we shall be able to record the name of this German woman who did so much for Jews during those terrible years. The world should know about it.

Informers in the Ghetto

In 1939, several weeks after the outbreak of the war, a young Jew suddenly appeared in Szydlowiec driving a German army truck with military license plates. His story was that the German military authorities had given him the truck as a reward for heroic service at the front during the war against Poland. His story was not only suspicious but it made no sense. The Jews of Szydlowiec, however, had more important worries at that time and didn't dig any deeper into the matter. They used the driver and his truck to take people to Lodz, where

they went to do business and earned a lot of money in the early days of the war. Naturally, the "fare" was very high.

The writer of these lines also made one of those trips. The passengers were covered over by a military tarpaulin and ordered not to speak a word to anyone during the trip. Through a small opening in the cover, however, we could see that when German patrols stopped our driver, he showed them various documents and they waved him on.

This line of communication between Szydłowiec and Łódź did not last very long. One fine day the Security Police drove into Szydłowiec, stopped at the young man's house and arrested him.

But a few months later he was back, this time in the service of the Price Control Police. He rode around in a droshky, stopped at certain addresses, broke open a brick wall or a padlock and removed hidden stores of goods such as leather, textiles, etc. He would write down the name of the owner in a notebook, and several weeks later the Jews whose name he had written down would be arrested and no one would be able to learn what happened to them.

The resultant panic among the Jews in Szydłowiec was completely understandable, because most of them now lived on what they had managed to hide before the Germans came in. As the "raids" by this young man became more and more frequent, the Jewish population began to appeal to the Judenrat for help.

The Council's decision was to undertake certain "Jewish methods," but this time they didn't work. We tried the head of the Price Control Office, but without success. We went to a higher authority with a request that they move the Price Control Police to another district, but that didn't work either. Meanwhile the number of local Jewish informers who joined the driver increased. It was clear to us that without these local

informers the driver, a stranger in town, would have been unable to find the hiding-places.

The Judenrat then called the young man in and offered to give him a weekly stipend if he would stop ruining the lives of Jews and creating Jewish widows and orphans. He agreed, and also asked for a stipend for his "assistants." This too was granted. One day later, the droshky reappeared on the street and resumed its old business. The stranger had informed the Price Control Police about the "deal" the Judenrat had offered him.

The Police immediately ordered the Judenrat to come to Radom. Yerakhmiel Morgenbesser, Abraham Rosenbaum and Pinchas Shteinman did so and were given a stern warning that if there was any further sabotage of the "fight against speculation" they would be held personally responsible — and the punishment for that crime was death.

In connectin with this there was a tragic fight in the forest. The Gestapo had arrested several Jews who were found with hidden goods. Among them were Shapshowich and Yehiel Oser Shotland. By chance, several of the Gestapo-men who had take the arrested Jews to Radom met at the home of Abraham Rosenbaum and after a few drinks, one of them let slip a secret:

On the way to Radom they decided to shoot their Jewish prisoners one at a time in the forest that lined the road. Two of the guards led the victim into the forest, one in front and one behind. The third man stayed with the truck. Yehiel Shotland was a tall, strong young man, and not easily cowed. The instant he heard the first shot coming from the forest, he attacked the Gestapo-man who was guarding the truck. Unfortunately, one of the other Germans had already come back. He hit Shotland over the head with his rifle butt.

The situation become intolerable. We started thinking about more drastic measures to get rid of the informers. For

this purpose the Executive of the Judenrat met at the home of the rabbi. The dayanim were also present. They discussed the classic issue of what one is permitted to do "if someone comes to kill you." They consulted all the rabbinic sources, from the earliest to the latest, and finally they found the applicable law.

Several days later the gendarmes knocked at the driver's door in the middle of the night, arrested him and took him to Radom. The Price Control Office tried to save him, but this time were unable to do so. Thus Szydłowiec rid itself of its worst Jewish informer. All the local informers were frightened by the downfall of their "leader." They came to the president of the Jewish Council and swore that they had nothing to do with the betrayal of Jews and that they would never have anything to do with such things.

A Few Episodes

Leybush David Schwartzfuter was the only Jew in Szydłowiec who poisoned himself on the day of the deportation. He is buried in the Jewish Cemetery there.

The rabbi and Yitzhok Shteinman, on the day of the day deportation, cried out to the Jews: "Don't weep! They may take our bodies but they will never take our souls! Our God is great! *Am Yisroel Chai!* The people of Israel lives!

On the day of the deportation, one of Shiya Lederman's daughters was hiding in an attic. She began to give birth. Out of fear that the newborn baby's cries would expose the hiding-place and all who were hidden there, they suffocated the baby.

During the deportation I managed to escape to Starachowic. After that I spent two years in various camps, from September 1942 to August 1944. Then I escaped to the forest, where I spent eight months. We were liberated by the Red Army, which appointed me City Commander in

Szydlowiec. Akiba Liberbaum, (later killed in the Kielce pogrom) and Yoske Minzberg, were two other Szydlowiecers in my group.

RUNNING FROM DEATH

by Motl Eisenberg

(Notes in a Diary)

On the 18th of August 1939, as on every Friday, I came to visit my family, who were staying in a summer-place not far from our town in the village of Charniecki-Gura. What I found was an upheaval. People running around breathlessly, deathly pale, frightened, the women's faces tear-stained. The war has broken out, they tell me. Men and women carrying bundles, valises, bedding, lounge-chairs, out of their rooms and cottages — they are hurrying to get to the railroad station.

By nightfall the resort is empty. Only a few Jews have stayed. The Sabbath passes in a nervous mood. Everybody is gloomy, uneasy.

According to the radio news, the panic is premature. No general mobilization has been called yet. But rest and good cheer are out of the question. The general mood is somber; people are quickly packing up and going home.

In Shidlovtsse itself, people are running to the food stores, buying everything they can. Soon the shelves are empty. Whoever has the money is laying in provisions. At night, the streets are not illuminated. Automobiles ride by with only their dim lights on. Posters warn people to remove anything made of wood from their attics, and to prepare supplies of water and sand. Finally, it comes: general mobilization.

Friday September 3, early morning, we hear it on the radio: Kowal, Krakow and other cities were bombarded during

the night by German planes. German troops have crossed the Polish border at many points. The war has begun.

The men in our leather factory come to work that morning as usual, but nothing gets done; the work falls from their hands. Nerves are stretched taut. Everybody is aware that a world conflagration has begun and that it will spare no one. Squadrons of enemy planes appear in the sky, flying very low, obstructed by no one. They are headed for Skarzysko, where there are large ammunitions plants and a transfer point for many railway lines. Soon we hear the sound of anti-aircraft guns and explosions of planes that are shot down.

The next day the whole Jewish population of Skarzysko appears in our town, some on horse-and-wagon, some on foot. They have left all their possessions behind.

Far into the night we sit by the radio, listening to broadcasts from Polish, German and foreign stations. The Polish radio reports: "All the German attacks were repulsed." The German side is not reporting any victories. No newspapers arrived from Warsaw — all the rail lines have been cut by German bombardment.

Several days pass. The first refugees appear on the main highway linking Krakow and Warsaw. Jews and Poles. Whole families. Wagons carrying children, household goods. Many people have made the trip on foot; they are weary to exhaustion.

The weather is unusually hot. It feels as if fire is dropping from the sky. People are too tired to move. They sit down on the sidewalk. They try to find a place to spend the night; tomorrow they will be running again — toward the east. Curious crowds surround them, listen avidly to their stories. They've come from the Czenstochow area — the German army has penetrated deep into Poland.

The wave of refugees keeps mounting every day. The streets are full of strangers.

Tuesday evening, September 5, we learn that the local police are getting ready to leave town. The German army is approaching Kielce, forty kilometers west of Szydlowiec.

Wednesday morning, the sixth, a group of us decide to take to the road. There is no time to think. The panic is growing worse. People pack a few pieces of clothing and some food and start off in unfamiliar directions. My wife and the wives of my friends take the smaller bundles and carry them through side streets, far outside the town, trying not to attract attention. We all meet at the prearranged place.

While we were packing, Yakov Shteinhorn, our factory expeditor, came in accidentally and saw what was happening. He didn't utter a word, but as he left he squeezed my hand and burst into sobs, like a child. Some relatives also came in. The goodbyes were brief. All eyes were moist.

At the outskirts of town our wives are waiting for us. My older son Moyshe has come with me. We are a group of nine men.

The road to the railroad station lies through fields where the grain has already been harvested. A hot summer's day. We come to a forest of young pine trees which borders the station and sit down to eat our breakfast. Everything is quiet. The air is pleasant. Nature is peaceful. But the bloody reality gives us no rest. According to our plan we must cover 30 kilometers today if we are to reach the city of Driltch (Ilcza).

We walk through Polish streets and villages. People are standing in front of their houses. We try to buy food from them, but they tell us they have nothing to sell.

Closer to Driltch, where a number of roads intersect, we find an army of refugees, all of them heading in the same direction — the Vistula. There we'll be able to rest, because the Polish army will make a stand at the river. Or so they say.

In the villages we meet Polish farmers, weeping and wringing their hands. The Germans are close by, they tell us. We assure them it isn't so.

When we finally reach Drilitch, it is pitch black. A road goes through the town, straight to the Vistula, 50 kilometers away. At dawn we find ourselves in a large village. Here we rest and have something to eat. We find a peasant who agrees (for a good price) to take us by horse-and-wagon to Lipsk, the closest town. For the first time since the outbreak of the war, we meet a regular Polish army unit — it too is marching toward the Vistula.

Here we also learn that the largest part of the Jewish population, led by the rabbi, is hiding in neighboring villages because of the frequent air raids. We are barely able to persuade our peasant guide to take us to Solec, where a bridge crosses the Vistula River. On the way we see many squadrons of German planes flying toward the bridge. The booming of anti-aircraft guns is ceaseless.

Before noon we arrive at a point about a kilometer from the bridge. The peasant, badly frightened, tells us that he will not go a step further. We gather up our bundles and hide among the trees. The German planes keep dropping bombs on the bridge. The anti-aircraft fire is keeping them high up and the bombs are missing the target. We can see Polish homes burning on both sides of the river.

For two hours we watch the battle for the bridge. German planes are still attacking every half hour. We use the "recess" to head for the bridge, but there we find Polish soldiers who check anyone trying to cross. Soldiers are also stationed along the length of the bridge, calmly observing the hordes of refugees trying to get across.

Our group finally gets on the bridge, but halfway across everyone starts running wildly, with their last bit of strength. We can feel the danger in the air. Our group is separated by

the crowds. My son races ahead, turning his head every few steps to keep an eye on my whereabouts. I run with all my strength, but I can feel the weight of my years. Desperately I grab hold of the edge of a wagon, maybe it will help me run faster. A man riding in the back of the wagon points a gun at me and I let go. (Later we learned that the wagon was carrying secret Polish documents.)

We barely make it to the other end of the bridge, rush pell-mell down the hill and hide among some trees. When we catch our breath and calm down a bit we start walking again. We have to move fast and get away from that dangerous spot. Soon we are in an orchard. Polish soldiers motion to us to keep away from two trucks carrying ammunition. Three enemy planes appear overhead. We throw ourselves to the ground. Ten steps in front of us, outside a barn and camouflaged with a covering of hay, stands a cannon. Two soldiers stand beside it. The muzzle of the gun is pointing to the sky. A few seconds later the cannon is spitting fire.

When the planes retreat we start walking on the road that leads to Apole, the next town. We meet up with the rest of our group. We are too exposed here. There are no trees along this road to hide in. By the time we reach the village it is good and dark. We approach a farmhouse. The peasant is friendly, heats up some tea for us, opens two stalls lined with straw, and we fall fast asleep. (I want to note here that during the entire period of our wandering the Polish peasants were friendly toward us.)

A few hours later several wagons carrying soldiers pulled up outside our stalls. We had to leave. We picked up our rucksacks and marched to the town of Apole, near Lublin.

A big, broad marketplace, one store right next to the other. We quickly find our friend Goldzamd, who had owned an apothecary in Shidlovtse. We breathe a little easier. There is no panic here. We can get anything we want to eat. We begin

to feel we are finally out of the war zone. Jews are sitting outside their little houses, talking calmly about the war. Once in a while a truck drives by filled with armed Polish soldiers. Whenever that happens, the Jews jump up from their seats, remove their hats and greet the soldiers sincerely.

Friday. We buy some basic necessities and that evening we start out again, but this time with a Jewish coachman. He takes us to the town of Lenczic, a little closer to Lublin. Around midnight we stop at a big marketplace, but there's no one in sight. We look around in the darkness for a place to sleep. The glow of a lamp leads us to a group of young Jews — two young women and several young men. They welcome us and put us up with several Jewish families. Since it is Friday evening we find ourselves eating at tables with white cloths and silver candlesticks. The warm Jewish intimacy is almost palpable.

The next morning, all the stores are closed. The Jews, dressed in their Sabbath best, gather in the street. A squadron of Polish planes flies by overhead. The Jews take this to mean that these are French flyers who have come to help. This is the first time since the war broke out that I have seen Polish aircraft.

Our spirits rise. One gets the impression that Polish resistance is stiffening, that a strong front will be established at the Vistula.

Saturday passes without incident, but in the evening a squadron of Polish planes again appears on the horizon.

We decide to bypass Lublin and go toward Chelm. That evening we arrange with our Jewish coachman to take us to Bichowa. We reach there around midnight. It is not a very pleasant place. The first thing we see are ruins of old buildings. There are still a few Jews here. They point us to a small Jewish inn. We knock for a long time before someone opens the door. An empty house with nothing but a table and a few chairs. We

bring in a bundle of hay from our wagon, spread it on the floor and fall asleep.

The next morning we travel to Zilkewa on a dirt road. The dust gets into your mouth, your nose. The wagon moves with great difficulty. The people and the horses are exhausted. Around noon we enter Zilkewa, a small town along the road that goes from Lublin to Chelm. Even before the wagon stops we are surrounded by a group of young Jews. Where are we coming from? Where are we going? Eventually they put us up with a few Jewish families.

After a little rest and a good meal we start out for Chelm, some 60 kilometers away. As we get closer to Chelm we learn that the city was bombed during the night, so we take a road that bypasses Chelm. On the way we meet a Jewish family hiding in the bushes. They tell us that many Jewish families are hiding in the forest nearby.

We wait till evening and head for the forest, where we meet many other Jews, but we decide to go a few kilometers further to the village of Leshnitzowke. Here we find a Jew who owns a house and a barn full of freshly harvested grain. It is comfortable here. All the rooms are filled with Jews who left Chelm. Bundles are everywhere. We spread out in the courtyard, wash ourselves, buy something to eat. That night we slept in the barn with all the other Jews.

Among them was a small group from Lublin, headed by an energetic young man about twenty. They are Communists, they tell us, who had been arrested by the Polish government and served time in prison. We become friendly with them and the next morning we start out together. We are heading for the Bug River. The road becomes wider and wilder, sandy, with ditches. The surrounding landscape is flat, not a house in sight, as though we were wandering in a desert. Night falls and for a long time we walk in the dark. Around midnight we come to a

little town near the river. The marketplace is crowded with wagons and people, all of them anxious to cross the River Bug.

At a bridge, which is at the other end of town, are some Polish soldiers, who tell us that we must have a permit from the local military commander before we can cross. The whole crowd heads toward the command post. The commander assures us that it makes no sense to run now, because the German planes can run faster. Cities like Zdalbunow, which is even closer to the Russian border, have already been bombed.

Without a permit there is no use even thinking about crossing the bridge. Having no alternative, we managed to find a peasant who let us spend the night in his barn. In the morning, back in town, we find a few dozen Jewish refugees. It is Erev Rosh Hashonah. We appeal to the local Jewish "mayor" and he puts us up in several Jewish homes.

The next morning we take a walk outside of town and strike up a conversation with several Jews there. They tell us that the Bug is not a deep river. There are even a few places where we could easily walk across. Without thinking too much about it, we get together on the other side of town. There we find a crowd of Jews who have also discovered the secret. We take off our shoes, roll up our trousers, walk across the river and head toward Libevne (Lubomil), the nearest town. Our feet are blistered. We sit down on the grass alongside the road to rest.

Finally we arrive in Libevne. It's the second day of Rosh Hashonah. A nice little shtetl in the east, on the way to Kovle. We are put up at the home of a Jewish leather merchant. Every evening we sit at the radio for hours, listening to the news. One evening the Moscow radio reports that the Red Army has been ordered to cross the Polish border and march to the Vistula, in accordance with an agreement with the German government.

The next morning our host comes running in and tells us fearfully that the Polish army is retreating and is going to set

fire to the city. Quickly we put on our rucksacks. Our host and his family are also ready to leave the house. Together we wait to see what will happen next. Through the window we watch the panic set in. Suddenly — crash! Artillery shots. A few minutes later a German tank stops in front of the house. Several Jews appear from nowhere and start a conversation with the German soldiers, who explain that they are only passing through and that soon the Russians will be coming in to take over. There are now thousands of refugees in Libevne, Jews and Poles. (Soon after the German army came in, most of the inhabitants, especially the Poles, had taken to the roads going westward.)

On the road where the Germans are marching stands an old Ukrainian. He is shouting: "This is what I call an army! This is a power! And this is the army that Poland wants to fight? This is the end! Poland is finished!" His eyes blaze as he screams on and on in a drunken frenzy.

At dawn on the first day of Succos a Russian military unit enters Libevne. For the shtetl it's a great sensation. The whole population comes out to greet them. A holiday mood. Fear of the German has vanished. People are optimistic. The next day a whole army marches in, armed to the teeth, motorized, with countless trucks, light and heavy tanks. They are marching toward Lublin. Large crowds of refugees march along with the troops. The same stream that was previously flowing eastward is now going to the west.

Our group separates into two. My son, my brother and I decide to go to Lwow; the others, to Vilna.

The week of Succos. As soon as it becomes known that a train is going to Kovle, we start our travels again. The train proceeds normally. We find one going to Lutsk, and from there we get to Lwow, where I have many friends among the businessmen. They help us find a place to stay. At first we were happy to escape from the Nazis. After a little while, when

the Soviet authorities began introducing their system, life was not so pleasant here either. Meantime, letters arrive from our families in Szydlowiec, begging us to come home.

In January 1940, after tortuous journeys and dangerous mishaps, we somehow managed to get back home.

In Szydlowiec, things are relatively quiet. Now and then an auto with German soldiers appears and people grow panicky. The Germans have come to round up people to clear the snow off the roads, or they are looking to buy provisions. I myself feel very depressed. I can't make peace with the big changes that have taken place. I've just come from a place where Jews can move around freely and suddenly I've fallen into an atmosphere like this. For a long time I haven't been out of the house. I spend as much time as possible with my family.

When the partners in the leather factory gathered at my home and began talking about business matters, it upset me very much. I've long since grown unaccustomed to things like this.

My wife has told me about her terrible experiences during the time I was away, about the Judenrat that now has complete authority over the Jewish population, about the tremendous taxes that have been levied against the Jews in the city, about the repressive measures they take when these taxes are not paid on time. Once, when we didn't pay our installment, the Judenrat arrested my oldest brother and his wife. When my wife tried to intercede with certain members of the Judenrat who were old friends of ours, they refused even to listen to her.

One cannot say that the actions of the Judenrat were always free of great wrongs. During the period when enormous amounts of money were being exacted from the Jews by the German authorities, certain members of the Judenrat — wealthy men — used their position to avoid paying their share

and even helped their relatives do the same. And they did ever worse things.

After several weeks went by, I began to interest myself in the business again. I put the books in order. I filled out reports on the condition of the merchandise and the balances for the past several years.

Periodically, German officers come in and demand leather. Many of them pay the set price; others pay nothing, employing various kinds of threats. One German commander from Skarzysko became well known among the Jewish leather merchants. From time to time he appears and "confiscates" large quantities of leather. One of his methods consists of pulling out his revolver and firing at the merchant, but in such a way that the bullet "only" grazes the victim's cheek.

One day at the end of 1940 I'm sitting in my office with the bookkeeper. A knock at the door. A tall, slim gentleman in civilian clothing enters, behind him an aide and a secretary. The gentleman behaves very formally. In Polish he tells us that he has been appointed by the German authorities as Commisar of the local leather factories. He counts the money in the cash box, takes the keys, and leaves. We "intervened" and managed to get another Pole appointed commissar.

The winter of 1940 passes without any major calamities. A larger wave of Jewish refugees has come from Lodz and Kalish, from the area that was incorporated into the German Reich. The Germans routed them out of their beds in the middle of the night, took them by truck to the Polish border — and dumped them into a field.

The poverty in Szydlowiec keeps deepening. Jews are allotted 7½ decagrams of bread a day (about 3 ounces), plus a similar amount of sugar and marmalade. Many are therefore running to the villages to buy food products and sell them in the city. Others wait for Polish tradesmen who come here to buy leather goods and shoes and they act as brokers for them.

Jewish butchers slaughter cows for non-kosher use. Some take jobs in the leather-good factories or in the tanneries. Many Jewish storekeepers live on hidden goods and sell off their reserves a little at a time.

To our great shame, Jewish informers have also sprung forth out of the earth. Early in the summer the district police appeared and conducted mass inspections, acting on "leads" supplied by Jewish informers. One of these characters, a refugee from Kalish, takes part in the inspections personally. They are usually done at night, when people are asleep. The police beat the Jews unmercifully, rip up floors, dig up the ground, test the walls for hiding-places. If they find hidden goods they arrest the owner and send him to a place from which he never returns. These inspections have been going on for weeks. People are afraid it will end by driving all the Jews out of the city while the Germans search all the Jewish homes. Such things have happened in some of the smaller towns in the area. The Jewish population is terrorized by this. When they go to bed at night they are so uneasy that the slightest sound awakens them. If they get through the night without incident they consider themselves lucky.

The Judenrat is trying to "persuade" the Germans to stop these inspections. They arrange feasts for the officers, give them expensive gifts, try to convince them that the Jewish population in Szydlowiec consists mainly of petty tradesmen, and that the small stocks of goods they still have is from before the war, that the Jews must find a source of income since they can't exist on the 3 ounces of bread.

Late summer an order is posted: All Jews age 16 to 25 must report to the labor office. A doctor there determines which ones are capable of doing heavy labor. Part of this group is sent by train to the Vistula, part to Belzec, near the Russian border, to dig anti-tank trenches. The families of these young people are getting worrisome letters. The work is very hard, the

living conditions inhuman. The supervisors are S.S.-men. Food must be bought at one's own expense. There have been casualties. Some of the workers had to march fifty kilometers from one work-place to another; those who lagged behind were shot on the spot.

This news has so alarmed the Jews that mothers besiege the Judenrat offices; whenever one of the Council members appears on the street the women noisily demand that the Judenrat supply food for these workers and ease their life. To make matters worse, the sons, brothers and relatives of Judenrat members, are not sent to these work-sites — each one of them has a pass showing that he works in some capacity for the Judenrat.

The German occupation authority has gradually taken over the whole economy of Poland, including the leather industry. They have set up a central office that handles all trade in rawhide and supplies the leather factories with raw materials. They have also opened a leather store which has the exclusive right to buy up the finished goods.

Our factory is working under the supervision of a Polish commissar. The work is going very slowly; there are problems with raw material and fuel. Frequently, military personnel comes to Szydlowiec and demands leather; some do it politely, others by threats. If we show them the circular hanging on the wall, which says that it is forbidden to sell leather to military personnel, they laugh. The Polish commissar is also afraid of them and we have no alternative but to hide whenever a military vehicle appears in the neighborhood.

One day during the summer a tall, stout German appears at the door of our warehouse. He is accompanied by a young Jew named Mordecai Zucker. The warehouse has a thick door with an iron bar. The windows are grated. The young man points to me and the German orders me to open the door at once. I try to tell him that I don't have the keys. He hits me

over the head with his blackjack. The workers in the courtyard cry out in alarm. My wife comes running with the keys. We open the warehouse, in which there is a lot of finished leather goods. Several high S.S. officers appear, carry out all the goods and load it into trucks that have pulled up outside. All this time my wife has been with me in the warehouse. Then my brother's wife comes in, along with her son and another worker. The German locks us all up in the warehouse, like prisoners. My son runs to the local police station. Two gendarmes arrive, stop the cars with the S.S.-men and force them to return the keys to us and put the goods back in the warehouse.

Autumn arrives. The Polish commissar is replaced by a German, an older man from Vienna. Of Czech origin, he speaks Polish with an accent, but he knows the Polish scene very well, having been a master tanner in various Jewish leather factories in Radom. We get along well with him.

With the outbreak of the German-Russian war the situation in Szydlowiec becomes a thousand times worse. The life of the Jews grows more difficult every day. We can feel the noose tightening around our necks. Every day new decrees which place another heavy stone on the backs of the starving Jewish population. The Judenrat makes every effort to ease the effects of these decrees. A special Council member is assigned to supply gifts and good meals for the Nazis.

From time to time cars drive into town with German soldiers who raid Jewish homes, drag out the young people and send them to various work sites outside the city. Some of these people run away and come back home to Szydlowiec.

In our factory the situation has grown worse. The friendly Viennese commissar took sick and was replaced by a sadistic anti-Semite whom we knew very well. We called him "Heine." This man, after he had been put in charge of the leather factory in Kielce, deported all the Jewish leather

manufacturers to concentration camps and confiscated their factories.

On the second day of Succos several trucks drive into town carrying the chief of the leather office in Radom, the newly appointed commissar Heine and a group of young Poles. They spread out over all the Jewish leather factories (which had been closed for a long time) and begin making strict inspections. That same evening I'm summoned by the new commissar, a big, red-faced German dressed in hunting clothes and wearing a green hat with a feather. At his side, a big, fierce-looking dog. He doesn't get up from his chair; his general demeanor is supposed to let me know that he is now the boss here, the prosecutor and the judge combined. Without looking at me he orders me to prepare a room for one of his aides who will manage the factory. Later a young Pole carrying two valises comes and takes over the room.

A week later, Heine is back, accompanied by a Polish young man named Shiwak, who is his deputy in the two Jewish factories in Szydlowiec that are still working. The following morning, the partners in the factories are summoned to the commissar's office. We stand inside the door like convicts. He calls each man's name, asks him what his function is in the factory, then tells us that he can get along without us and that from now on we are not to enter the factory. My younger brother, Wolf, is permitted to continue working as a master; also the bookkeeper and my nephew as his assistant.

Whenever Shiwak and the commissar's other aide get reliable information about Jews who are producing leather goods in secret, they arrest them during the night and then collect hefty bribes for releasing them.

My wife is upset and embittered. Our home has become a jail for us. Our partners live with us and order us around. We would prefer to be "evicted" from our own home, but we're afraid to run away because it could provide a pretext for

further harassment. Gradually we begin moving things out of the house in secret. One afternoon my younger son, Shlomo, carried out a valise full of underwear. Shiwak happened to notice him, stopped him, and smiled: "You're moving out?"

The Jews still working in the factory are very worried. The master and the bookkeeper are certain that pieces of leather are occasionally missing. They are afraid they will be blamed for it; who will the Germans hold responsible, if not the Jews? So they buy leather in the market and replace the missing pieces.

One day a representative of the leather office comes into our factory and selects a shipment of leather. It is all noted in the record and numbered. The representative says that in a few days he will come and pick it up. That night the Jewish factory watchman knocks at my window and tells me in a trembling voice that ten minutes ago Shiwak had come in, opened the warehouse, put the stuff in his valise and taken it home.

We are at our wit's end. We know the danger that faces all the Jews who work in the factory. We discuss it with the bookkeeper and decide to report it to the police. It all happened very quickly. When Shiwak appeared in the street with the leather he found a Polish policeman waiting for him, along with my brother's son. The policeman took the pack of leather from him. But we are still worried. Won't the Jews be held accountable for this too?

The Radom leather office was immediately notified of the scandal. The head of the office came down, investigated, checked the leather in question, asked about the circumstances of the robbery. Before he went back he told us that we were very lucky that he was there personally to establish Shiwak's guilt. The next day the commissar himself arrived, very upset. He screamed and carried on about why he wasn't informed about this immediately. The day after that he came with a civilian inspector. They interrogated all the Jews who were

involved and ordered them arrested. After intervention by the Judenrat and the German police from Radom (Szydlowiec was under their jurisdiction) the arrested Jews were released.

My brother Wolf and I are of the opinion that the matter has not ended with this. Heine will not take this lying down. We must get away from Szydlowiec. We make the necessary arrangements to get a pass for the train and one night we slip out of the city and get safely to the railroad station.

We got to Pietrkow, where the Nazi authorities were less brutal than in other places. From there we went to Warsaw, where my other two brothers and a sister were living. After a few weeks in Warsaw we saw that their troubles were even worse than ours, so we went back to Szydlowiec, which by that time had officially been declared a ghetto, although without any barbed wire fences.

The Jews here think that the first thing they need for a little security is a work-place, so they try to get jobs in various German firms in Szydlowiec and vicinity. There are, however, work-places which they try to avoid. So the Germans and their assistants begin rounding up young people in the street, raiding Jewish homes at night, dragging people out of their beds and sending them to different work-places.

Here I must mention the sad role of the Jewish police, whom even their own friends shunned. Also, a deep chasm has opened up between the masses of Jews and the Judenrat, who, with their relatives, were a privileged class. Their self-satisfaction was shocking, as were their parties in the local taverns . . .

More and more frequently we hear rumors that mass executions of Jews are taking place. One day we heard it directly from two refugees from Krakow, but we lulled our fears with the "theory" that it was happening only in the larger cities.

Meanwhile, we are becoming poorer and poorer. Food is

scarcer and scarcer. Entire families go out begging for a piece of bread. A meeting is called to set up a free soup kitchen. Such a kitchen had been opened before, but had closed for lack of provisions. Many people came to this meeting. Everyone speaks about the terrible plight of the hungry, about the necessity for a soup kitchen that must be kept open despite all the difficulties.

Yitzhok Shteinman, a religious young man, proposes that we go to all the well-to-do Jews in Szydlowiec and confiscate whatever we need. He pledges to pay 500 zlotys a month to the kitchen, in addition to the several pots of food that he cooks himself every day and distributes in his own building. A butcher takes the floor, shouting that we dare not remain indifferent to the misery all around us. He offers to set an example: even though he has to risk his life to earn money, he pledges a certain quantity of fat for the kitchen.

A committee is elected that goes energetically to work. They arrange with well-to-do Jews to collect an initial sum and then monthly payments. The Judenrat also pledges to provide a certain quantity of food products every month for the kitchen. Several big rooms in Fishel Eisenberg's factory are fixed up with big kettles fastened to the floor. The necessary personnel has volunteered. The work proceeds on a large scale. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of a group of people, especially the Shteinman family, the kitchen continued to function almost up to the day of the deportation. The number of lunches distributed daily often reached 1800.

People are becoming more and more dispirited, however. Human life means nothing. Jews wander around like lost sheep waiting for the slaughter . . . There is no voice to offer us comfort or encouragement. The whole environment seems to be staring down at us sullenly, impatient for our final hour.

We keep hearing tragic news of deportations of Jewish communities nearby and far away. We feel that the fateful

hour is approaching also for us. People are frightened, hopeless, lost. They liquidate their homes, sell whatever they can. They give away clothing to friendly Poles, hoping that if they survive . . . People make rucksacks and pack up their basic necessities. They are getting ready . . .

Everyone has his own opinion about what must be done now. Some go to work camps, others maintain that the arms factories are a safer place. Some build hiding-places. Others look for a way to hide with farmers whom they know. Most of the Jews, however, are passive and prepare for the worst.

I sent my younger son, Shlomo, to the Starchowicz arms factory; my older son Moyshe, my wife and youngest daughter to Wolonow. I myself remained in the factory. The commissar assures me I have nothing to fear.

Szydlowiec is in turmoil. Every day we hear about liquidations of nearby Jewish communities. Smaller communities have been ordered to move to Szydlowiec in the next two days. Long lines of wagons appear, carrying furniture and bedding. They stop at the Judenrat building. The police run around, "settling" the new refugees in Jewish homes.

Events happen in quick succession. Police appear, Gestapo, military units. They go from house to house, select furniture, clothing, blankets, and order the owner to bring the stuff to city hall. From there — who knows where it goes? The district chief appears. He calls together the Judenrat and the Jewish police and makes them responsible for collecting past and present "taxes" in the next three days — a sum of 50,000 zloty.

Rumors are spreading that the infamous cattle cars are already at the railroad station; tonight the deportation will begin. Jews sit with all their clothes on, their bundles ready. When morning comes, they take a deep breath. Another day's grace . . . We live from hour to hour.

Saturday night about twenty of our young men come

running home from a labor camp — they've heard that the Germans are getting ready to deport the Jews of Szydlowiec and they want to be with their families.

Erev Yom Kippur comes an announcement: the Jewish population must bring in a "contribution" of 15,000 zloty. On Tuesday, 3 o'clock in the morning, the town is surrounded by Ukrainians, Gestapo and police. The firemen ring their alarm bells. The deportation has begun . . .

A few days before the deportation I and my younger brother had informed the commissar that we were leaving our work to be with our families. The truth was that we went to meet with a peasant who had promised to hide us. Through various side roads he led us to his house and took us up to the attic. The floor of the attic was covered with straw.

After several days in the attic, the worm of despair begins gnawing at us: Will we lie here like this, waiting for the end of the war? What will happen when the villagers find out about us? And what will happen when winter comes — will we be able to survive it?

Another few days pass and the peasant tells us that the deportation has taken place. That night some of his neighbors come to visit. From our hiding-place we hear them talking far into the night about the events of that "holy day." Most of them are glad it happened. They warm up to the subject and their voices rise: "The Jews must be destroyed to the last man, woman and child." A few argue that without the Jews things will be worse — there will be no trade and no jobs.

The peasant has been in our factory. He brings us a letter from my older brother, who has remained there: the Jews who are employed in both leather factories, as well as the Jewish police and a group of young men who are putting the empty Jewish homes "in order" will not be touched. Tomorrow there will be a registration of all those who remain in Szydlowiec to work. His advice is that it will be better for us if we are present

at the registration. Late that night we set out for Szydłowiec, with the peasant as our guide. On the way, however, we meet a Jewish workman from our factory, who tells us that the Gestapo has been in the factory today and has instructed the commissar that no Jews are to continue working in the leather factories. So we decide to turn around and go back.

The peasant is unhappy with our decision. It is already growing light — we will have to hide somewhere in the field or in another farmhouse and not come back to his place until dark. All that day we were in constant danger. Some farmers surrounded us and threatened to turn us over to the village magistrate. It took a lot of money to get ourselves out of their clutches.

Our farmer didn't come back for us, as he had promised. We assumed he wanted to get rid of us, but having no other choice we managed to get back to his house that night and rapped at his window. He hid us again.

A few days later he tells us that after the deportation, many Jews were found in their hiding-places, among them my father, who had been hiding in an attic in the factory. The Germans had taken the Jews to Skarzysko — the younger ones to the local arms factory; the older ones were deported along with the Jews of Skarzysko. My older brother and his wife escaped to the home of a farmer who took them to Pshyskhe. My brother's son Abraham-Isaac and his bride escaped to Ostrowiec.

After a few more days go by, the peasant tells us that he can't sleep nights; he is afraid to keep us there any longer. We get word about this to my brother. Soon afterward his son Jacob comes and brings us two special passes to travel by train to Starchowicz. There we meet many friends from Szydłowiec, including our own children, who had been staying with a leather merchant. We are overjoyed to see each other again. Everyone has a different story to tell.

When the news comes that the Germans are going to liquidate the camp at Starchowicz, we set out for the camp at Wolonow, where our wives and some of our children are. The camp at Wolonow is much worse than the one at Starchowicz. The German overseers, along with their Polish and Ukrainian helpers, are running wild. Hundreds of Jews have been shot here by these murderers.

It is horrible to think about. It's not bad enough these Nazis in Wolonow kill innocent people; they also enjoy torturing them before they kill them. I saw it with my own eyes.

I have learned that a group of Jews is going out tonight to see how the ghetto is being set up in Szydlowiec. My younger brother and I decide to join this group. We crawl through a hole in the fence and after trudging through some snow-covered fields, we arrive at the home of one of our workers outside of town. We knock and they let us in. We climb up to the attic, where we learn that some Jews have gathered at Fishel Eisenberg's factory. After dark, we go there and find that a number of small field kitchens have been set up in the yard for the poor and the hungry.

It should be noted here that even under these most difficult conditions Jews displayed phenomenal energy and inventiveness in finding food and places to sleep.

Every day new groups of Jews arrive, people who stayed in the towns after the deportations or who come from liquidated work-places. When the crowding becomes intolerable, a second "ghetto" is created in two large apartment houses in the Jewish marketplace. In moving from one ghetto to another many Jews lost their lives.

The Gestapo has appeared again, this time rounding up young people whose whereabouts the Polish criminal underworld has exposed. They are taken out to a back street and shot. Some time later a fleet of taxis appears, carrying

German soldiers; they round up the Jews who had come from Drilitch because among a group of captured partisans they have found several Jews from that town.

The murder of Notte Eisenberg's wife was particularly shocking. She had moved from one neighborhood in the ghetto to another, "escorted" by a Jewish policeman. From a distance, Polish policemen had shot her, dragged her body to the cemetery and robbed her of 28 zloty. Evidently they had expected to find much more money on her.

The new ghetto in Szydlowiec is becoming more and more dangerous. Every day, Jews are being robbed, beaten, murdered.

Wandering around the ghetto one sees utter misery. Several thousand Jews are inhumanly packed together into a small area. The Nazis have one objective: to extinguish the last spark of the human spirit, to turn people into subhuman creatures. This cannot continue for much longer. They are obviously collecting the remnants of Jewish communities here in order to destroy them once and for all. From these Jews we hear gruesome stories. Some have come from Wolonow to try to escape a typhus epidemic there.

Poles from surrounding villages also come to the ghetto, offering to hide Jews in return for large sums of money. My younger brother Wolf and I meet with a young man who is hiding at a farm in a nearby village. He tells us that the farmer in whose house he is hiding "needs" another person who can pay well. December 18, 1942 we leave the ghetto. After an hour's walk we come to the house. There is no furniture in it but a bed. The floor is covered with straw. This is supposed to be a hiding-place for three people. The next morning the farmer comes and warns us that our presence there must remain a deep secret. Not only our lives are in danger but the lives of the farmer and his family as well. We are afraid to move around. We speak in whispers. The food is worse than

primitive, but the farmer can do nothing to arouse the suspicion of his neighbors.

After a few days he comes back from Szydlowiec and tells us that police and Ukrainians have entered the town, stationed armed guards all around and herded all the Jews into the railroad station. We sit there speechless, as though we had just returned from the funeral of our closest relatives.

One of the things the farmer had told us was that the trains for deporting the Jews of Szydlowiec were not quite ready in time, so the Nazis had taken the Jews to a brick factory in the woods. People who were still wearing decent-looking clothing were taken deeper into the woods, robbed and shot. The next day the train arrived. Several families, among them Pinchas Shteinman, had put their arms around each other and refused to get into the trains. They were all shot, but not before they managed to tear up all their money and toss it into a field.

The farmer also told us that several trucks had come into the ghetto with Jews from the Hasag camp. Seeing that the ghetto was empty, they started walking to the railroad station. Before they got there, however, the Nazis came upon them, shot them and left their bodies strewn all along the road.

Life in our hiding-place is becoming impossible. Not a breath of fresh air, not a ray of light. Our thoughts gnaw at us. How much longer can we go on this way? If the hour for the final destruction of all the Jews has struck, can we be the exception? We are afraid even to groan. The local peasants are afraid that the Germans will raid the farms for cows and grain and find us, so we must go down into the cellar. A big rock is placed on the cellar door as a precaution.

The farmer has brought us a newspaper put out by the Polish underground in the city. We read about the defeats the German army is suffering on the various fronts. A spark of comfort rises within us. The paper also tells about successful

attacks on the Germans by partisan groups. Our farmer also recounts an episode which shows how frightened the Germans are becoming. In the village of Pogzala, it happened that a dog went mad. The peasants, brandishing clubs, chased the dog onto the highway. At that moment an auto drove by with some German civilians. Seeing the peasants with their clubs, they jumped out of the car with their hands up!

The underground newspapers are sounding an alarm: As soon as the Germans have finished with the Jews they will turn their attention to the Poles. Hundreds of Polish villages are being evacuated to make room for Germans from the Baltic lands. Polish peasants are putting these villages to the torch.

The farmer has brought us news that he must change our hiding-place again — he has been ordered to make his house available for quartering German soldiers.

I don't think I'll be able to hold out much longer. The new hiding-place is a grave with thick walls that let in no light. I'm getting terrible headaches. My eyes have become infected; I can hardly open them.

New arrivals keep coming into the ghetto. One evening the Germans brought in 1200 Jews from Radom alone.

* * *

The weather has turned warmer. Life in the ghetto is becoming more organized. A new Judenrat has been formed, new Jewish police. Jewish doctors are organizing medical help. Even trade develops. Jews are rushing to nearby villages to buy food products. A restaurant is opened. Poles come into the ghetto bringing things to sell. They are buying clothing, underwear, watches, jewelry.

Suddenly, completely unexpectedly, our situation has changed radically for the better. On January 14, 1945 the Germans left the farmhouse. That evening the farmer came

into the cellar with terrific, almost unbelievable news: the Red Army is now in Szydlowiec!

We crawl out of our grave, dirty but happy. Not until that moment did our "host" tell us that partisans had hidden ammunition in his stable.

Before dawn we are walking on a back road to Szydlowiec. I can barely move my legs. We come into the town. It is hardly recognizable. It seems impossible that only yesterday thousands of Jews lived here.

With a group of other survivors, we walk through the Jewish part of town. Our hearts are heavy. In the cemetery the oldest of the Finklers takes a little *siddur* out of his pocket and says a prayer. We all repeat the words softly after him. The tears run silently down our cheeks. When we come to the kaddish, all of us break into a spasmodic weeping .

ESCAPE FROM THE ABYSS

By Ben-Tsion Rosenberg

By August 1939 it was difficult to maintain the illusion that there would not be a war. On Friday, September 1st, there was no longer any doubt; the war and its horrors were already raging before our very eyes. The Jews called that day "Black Friday." Saturday I was looking for a way to get home to Szydlowiec from Lodz, where I had been working. But all the roads were blocked. Tuesday we heard the call on the radio: All young men must try to get to Warsaw. Wednesday I met three other Szydlowiecers — Yosel Hoch's two sons and Taybe Farber's son-in-law, who also were working in Lodz. We decided to try to get home together.

It was a perilous journey. German planes were bombing the roads. On the way I met Yosel Ackerman (now in Israel) and Lieberbaum, both from Szydlowiec. They took me to their

army unit, gave me a loaf of bread and told me to keep running, because even the Polish army was in full retreat. So we kept on running. And then, one awful night, both Hoch brothers were killed.

During our flight we developed blisters on our feet, and having no way to heal them, they became more and more painful. As it to spite us, the heat during that golden Polish autumn was merciless. Evenings turned cool and we slept in the fields.

The highway to Warsaw has been cut. The main roads were being used by the military. The first German tanks rolled into view; they were frightful. Farber's son-in-law and I decided to head for Biala-Rowske. We arrived there on a Friday night. The Jews there made us welcome, but the general mood was low. We rested only a few hours; we wanted to get to Szydlowiec as soon as possible.

On the road we were stopped by German soldiers who asked us if we had seen any Polish tanks. I said no. My companion said yes. The soldiers started to beat me, but luckily the tanks appeared at that moment and they let me go.

Sunday, we got to Radom, where I looked up an uncle of mine. They found clothing for us; by that time, whatever we were wearing was dirty and torn. The Jews there were in a panic; the Germans were settling in there as if they were planning to stay a long time. They advised us to keep on going. By the time we go to Szydlowiec we were utterly exhausted.

Everyone was happy to see me, of course; it was a miracle that I was still alive, but they were still worried about my father, whom the Poles had taken away somewhere. It was a day of miracles, however. My father also came home — precisely at midnight. His trip home had also been a dangerous one, but there he was, despite everything. There was still a great concern for my sister Noche in Warsaw.

The brown destroyer was tightening his tentacles around my native shtetl. The new rulers were few in number, but they immediately started issuing decrees that embittered the lives of the Jews. The first order established a 6 p.m. curfew for Jews, violation of which was punishable by death. The first victim of this order was Krupter's son, who was shot not far from his home. This murder had a shattering effect on us, but death soon became a very frequent visitor to our doomed community.

The Nazis quickly stopped up the sources of our livelihood. We now had to go to great lengths to earn enough only for basic necessities. My mother started baking bread to sell. It was now a dangerous occupation, but what else could we do? The entire burden soon fell on me. This artist became a smuggler. I began making trips to Radom, Warsaw, Skarzysko and other cities, buying and selling things at great risk to my life. Necessity does not permit the luxury of being afraid.

Late in November came the decree ordering all Jews from 18 to 45 to register with the authorities. Since I wasn't recorded in the population lists of Szydlowiec, I didn't go to register. The whole registration business threw everyone into a panic, because they knew it was a list for forced labor.

A Judenrat was organized, with Morgenbesser as chairman. I don't want to say too much about him, good or bad, especially since he is no longer alive. Working with him in the Judenrat were Abraham Finkler, Moshe Berger, Moshe Milstein, Hirsh Vester and others. They were hardly in an enviable position — between the hammer and the rock — but they did do some laudable things. Not all of them. But to paint a totally black picture makes no sense either.

I recall an incident when the Germans were holding captured soldiers of the former Polish army in the brewery. Among them were many Jews, including a few Szydlowiecers. At the risk of life they were provided with food and clothing. Some of them were released, to prevent them from being sent

to Germany for slave labor. It was done just in time. A week later would have been too late.

Early in the winter of 1940 we heard that a ghetto was being established in Lodz. Our family decided to bring Uncle Benjamin Rosenberg to Szydlowiec, thinking that life would be easier for him here. I engaged a Polish driver to take me to Lodz. The Jews there were frightened and dejected by the news about the ghetto. Walking through the streets of Lodz and trying to avoid Gentile eyes, I bumped into Yitzhok Moro. (He lived on the "Aryan side" and was not wearing the yellow badge.) He was afraid to be seen talking to me, so we had a very brief conversation. All my efforts to get my family out of Lodz ended in failure.

At home we continued our daily struggle with privation. Transports of Jews from Lodz and Starchowicz kept arriving. Among the Lodzers was a close relative of ours whom we took in. The Nazi destroyer was insatiable. Suddenly he decided to open various work places outside Szydlowiec, for which he needed hands. I tried to avoid the dragnet, but in order to get a food card I had to register with the Jewish community. So in August 1940, I reported for a physical examination in the nail factory on Sodec Street. Many young fellows in Szydlowiec "got married" at that time, hoping to be excused from the labor quotas, but that was just another one of our illusions. Most of these young people were rounded up.

I did get a letter from the Judenrat stating that I was the sole breadwinner in the family, which got me a temporary reprieve. Several others were excused for the same reason, plus a few for illness. All the others were taken to Juzefow and Apole to dry out the swamps — about 900 people in all. The Freedman brothers later escaped from Apole.

Conditions in the ghetto soon resulted in various diseases, most widespread of which were dysentery and typhus. There wasn't a family in which someone wasn't sick. In Notte

Eisenberg's school and in the *Haknoset Orkheim* they set up a hospital of sorts. This eased the situation a little, but there were hardly any medicines. People died every day of these diseases. My sister Reyzl fell ill, but we were able to pull her through.

From the young people who had been sent away came very sad letters. Their families ran to the Judenrat for help, but they were really powerless in this situation. At the end of the year many returned, sick, dirty, starving. Their families made superhuman efforts to save them.

The work kept getting harder. The head of the Judenrat labor office was Notte Rosenbaum's son. His job was a very difficult one. We kept hearing that the situation in other towns was even worse. The best evidence of that was that Jews from other places kept coming to Szydlowiec to live.

In June 1941, when the Nazi-Soviet war erupted, we fed ourselves on false illusions. The Russians would deal the Germans such a heavy blow that they would forget all about the Jews. But of course we were wrong. First the Nazis battered the Russians, then they began terrorizing the Jews even worse than before. But in those June days many Szydlowiec Jews who had run to the Soviet side came back. They told us that life there hadn't been a bed of roses for them. Some were emotionally shattered because they had believed that in the land of the Bolsheviks, justice reigned supreme. They learned otherwise.

The Germans were very methodical in their extermination policy. Autumn 1941 they set up a ghetto in Szydlowiec. It was not separated by walls but by signs which threatened Jews with dire punishment if they took one step outside the designated areas. This threw a pall over everyone because it cut off our last source of income. Jews were forbidden to go into the countryside. Poles, however, were allowed into the ghetto.

They used the opportunity to exchange minimal food products for a maximum of cash and valuables.

Some Jews risked their lives — and lost them — in this deadly struggle for survival. It tied my hands too. Since I couldn't go into the villages and small towns, our only sources of income left was the "bakery." In the attic we ground the little bit of grain that we obtained at the risk of life, and at night we baked it. We trembled at every sound. Death lurked in every corner.

In Szydłowiec there was a gang of young Poles, headed by Plaskato's son, who often attacked us and stole our bread. One night, as my father stood working at the oven, they knocked at our door. He went outside, all perspired, to see what they wanted. It was a cold night and he caught pneumonia. A few days later he was dead a natural death. My mother never recovered from the shock.

The Germans kept trying to increase the number of slave laborers in their arms factory at Skarzysko. From Szydłowiec alone they sent truckloads of workers, among them my sister Reyzl. She became ill there and after several weeks came home so weak she couldn't stand up. The letters that came from there were bitter and tear-soaked. We knew that the situation was intolerable, but could do nothing about it.

In Szydłowiec itself things continued to worsen. Many began envying those who had been sent to Skarzysko. They even tried to bribe certain officials to send them there or to Starchowicz. But it didn't help. The Nazi noose was tightening around our necks; sooner or later it would strangle us.

In mid-summer 1942 we started getting news from the Warsaw ghetto which made it clear that all these "resettlements" led only to horrible deaths. Motl Fishman's son-in-law, who had an "Aryan" look, stole out of the Warsaw ghetto, came to Szydłowiec and told us stories that left everyone in a state of shock. His dreadful news went from

mouth to mouth and convinced everyone that the same fate awaited us.

My sister Noche and her husband were in the Warsaw ghetto. I later learned that they both perished in the uprising, at Mila 53.

On Rosh Hashona we held services in private homes, but it was more a spasmodic weeping than "davnen." The *Unesaneh Toykef* was no longer a prayer but an accurate description of the thousand deaths that threatened every Jew, old and young. From Radom and Zwolin we heard that the deportation had already taken place there. The biggest optimists among us still had sparks of hope that we would be spared this fate, but people looked at them as though they were out of their minds.

The Ten Days of Penitence became Ten Days of Mourning for what was past and what lay ahead. During the Kol Nidre prayer you could hear the sound of weeping all the way out in the streets. Jews mechanically wished each other "good year" but no one believed that we would still be alive next year. Everyone was certain that for us it was our last holy day on earth.

The day after Yom Kippur — it was Tuesday, September 22nd — we were still baking bread in our bakery, we still lived with the illusion that Succos we would still be in Szydlowiec, but the fates were mocking us. Three o'clock in the morning the church bells started. Jewish and Polish police burst into Jewish homes with the news: by 8 o'clock that morning everyone must be at the haymarket. We were permitted to take along our personal belongings.

The entire ghetto was surrounded by Ukrainian and Lithuanian guards. The air was split by the heartrending weeping of old and young. People dressed their crying children in the dark. Our neighbors came and took the unbaked bread from the oven. Our shtetl had become a gehennum beyond the power of human description.

Several days earlier Yankl Stolasz and I had decided to prepare a hiding-place in our cellar. We had stored bread, water and other food there. In this new "apartment" were my mother, my sisters Dvora and Reyzl, Noche's little girl and Yankl's family.

Around seven o'clock in the morning we heard a barrage of gunshots in the street. Ukrainian and Lithuanian fascists were running wildly through the streets looking for Jews. Later we learned that they shot Ita Shterbatsky, who had returned to Szydlowiec for her jewelry. The streets were strewn with Jewish dead.

Our hiding-place became a real vale of tears. We suffered the pain of all the others. We could see what was happening outside; it was like a nightmarish film. I could hear Saul Wolkasz's sick wife — who was unable to get to the haymarket — pleading with a Lithuanian guard for mercy. He promptly put a bullet in her head.

At eight o'clock a great silence descended on Szydlowiec, the silence of a cemetery. In the cellar, we thought we were the only Jews who were hiding. Later we learned that some 300 Jews were doing the same thing.

Around five in the afternoon we saw Jews being beaten outside Plaskota's orchard; their cries must have reached heaven.

There had not been enough room in the trains for all the Jews, so the Germans had taken half to the station and half to the castle.

That night my mother asked me to go up into the house for some water and a few other things. But there was nothing left except a coating of feathers. The Poles had come in and taken everything.

Our "courier" was Yankl Stolasz's young son, who had an "Aryan look." He went out and brought us back bits of news — the Jews are surrounded by an S.S. cordon; for a drink of water

people are paying thousands of zlotys. On the third day the Jews were deported, but hundreds were shot or simply died of pain and exhaustion.

In the cellar we were enveloped by a feeling of horror. Mother wept, complained that we should have gone with all the others. Her fear mounted when she realized that Poles were ransacking the house, sometimes directly outside the cellar door. The Jewish police were running through the buildings shouting: "Jews, come out of your hiding-places, no one will be hurt!" This tactic worked; many did come out. We had decided not to do so, but some Poles discovered our cellar. If we gave them all our valuables, they promised not to inform on us, but they went straight to the S.S. The S.S. came but did not shoot us or even beat us. They took us to Pinkert's "block" in the old sawmill. Several hundred other Jews were there, mostly from Szydlowiec. They could barely stand on their feet.

An auto full of Germans arrived. The rumor was that in exchange for a thousand zlotys they would take us all to Starachowce, but no one really believed it. We were sure it was just another Nazi trick. We stayed at Pinkert's until the death march began.

Twenty Polish farmwagons arrived, guarded by S.S. armed to the teeth. We had to be out of there in half an hour. The old and the sick were put in the wagons. The rest of us walked toward Skarzysko. I took a last look at my birthplace as I choked down the tears. I was ashamed to raise my eyes and look at my mother or my sisters. I felt everything sinking beneath my feet, especially the human species. Only the Jewish police, about fifty of them, stayed behind; among them I recall Yitzhok Milstein, Abraham Shadman, Notte Broitman.

The Jews in Skarzysko already knew their fate — and ours. The newly arrived victims were quartered in the synagogue and in private homes. That night no one slept. The process was repeated. Five in the morning the ghetto was

surrounded. By seven o'clock everyone had to lay his neck on that altar the Nazis called "umschlagplatz." The Angel of Death began his work. The "selection managers" chose 150 healthy-looking men and women for "special work." No one in our family had the privilege of being chosen for that group . . .

From a distance I could see them herding Szydlowiecers into the cattle-cars, among them I recognized Hannah Moro, Yitzhok's sister.

A few minutes before they put us into the trains my mother begged me tearfully to join the "special group." Her words had a ghostly sound: "Let at least one of us remain alive. Don't stand here, my son. Go with them!" Then I heard the cries of Noche's child. They paralyzed my mind. They engraved themselves so deeply in my memory that I never forgot them. I ran to the "special group." My sister Reyzl followed me. No one stopped us, no one said a word.

As I stood among the "lucky" ones, I managed to get a look at my mother, my sister Dvora and Noche's child. At eleven o'clock the death train moved. It was Simchas Torah. "Simcha!"

* * *

In the camp at Skarzysko they put us to work on various jobs. Reyzl was sent to "Project C." I was chosen by *Wachfuehrer* Hass and his Jewish assistant, Jacob, to work in "Project B." There I met Chayelev Freedman, Feyga and Leah Schwartzfinger (grandchildren of Shmuel Yankl). I immediately made efforts to have Reyzl brought to my workplace, but to no avail. I learned that she was working with a dangerous gas called Picryn, but she never lived to die a natural death. When I discovered, a month later, that the Nazis had shot her, I broke down completely. I knew instinctively that I was now the only one in our family still in the hands of the murderer.

My job was loading and unloading trucks, under the supervision of a Polish foreman who had worked here before the war. In this hell he was an angel. Thanks to him I survived.

Most of the Jews worked in munitions factories where the foremen were animals in human form. I still remember some of their names: Leidik, Stein, Kroner, Meshner, Hering, Pawlowski and his son. The worst of them were Leidik and Stein. Their victims were living corpses with dead eyes. Every worker had a norm to fill. Failure to do so resulted in beatings. Hass, who ran the camp, came in every day with his dog and issued his orders. Commandants were Jacob, Sigmund and a young woman from Suchedenyew (near Kielce). Her name was Renna. The commander of the Jewish police was a man named Yermeliev (from Radom). He and Sigmund were a pair of merciless brutes who enjoyed tormenting their victims.

During the winter I worked at unloading potatoes. My foreman, Laskowski, pretended not to notice how I was “organizing” the potatoes (putting a couple of them into my pockets.) This was a highly dangerous thing to do, but the will to live is stronger than the fear of death. It happened once that a Ukrainian guard saw me take a potato. He started dragging me over toward the barbed wire. I resisted, because that meant certain death — the guards had orders to shoot anyone seen in that area. Finally he took me to the guardhouse, where they gave me a beating. It was not enough, however, to stop me from doing it again.

The situation grew even worse when the camp chiefs thought up a “simpler” way to kill us — they took small groups of inmates into the woods and shot them. It fell to my lot to be chosen for the group in Laskowski’s unit that became the gravediggers. We were given only a few hours to dig the graves. Our guards were Ukrainians who speeded us up with their rifle butts. Then they drove the victims to the ditches and

shot them. In one such "action" I recognized Miriam Freedman and a son of Beyla Barkess.

This work unnerved me completely. I dreamt continuously about the wretched figures of the murdered Jews. I stopped "organizing" the potatoes. I moved about like a shadow, waiting for the end.

Around that same time, Commander Yermelov of the Jewish police was in a constant rage. We called him "the tiny prize-fighter." My tortured spirit burned with hatred for him. I could not understand how a Jew, of his own free will, could torment his own brothers this way. However, this too passed. One day he was "demoted" and sent to work in a munitions factory. A few weeks later he was barely recognizable.

We lived to have the same revenge on Weizhandler, a sadistic foreman. If he had a grudge against you, that was the end. We lived in mortal fear of him. Laskowski and I used to discuss ways of rendering him harmless. We succeeded in having him sent to Leidik's unit, where he quickly broke down. One day he sidled over to our section and sobbed: "What did I ever do to anyone?" I blew up and told him to thank G-d we even let him live, because for what he had done he deserved hanging.

With us also was Aaron Shichter, a Bund activist in Szydlowiec. At the end of 1943 the Nazis put him in the unit that was working with the gas. He was in touch with the underground socialist movement, which sent money to him in the camp. We noticed that he started looking a little better. In 1944 he escaped to the forest, where he fell victim to a Nazi bullet, as did many of his comrades.

In 1944 we started hearing about the victories of the Russians and the Allied armies. This news raised our spirits a little, but in July of that year the Germans began liquidating the camp. They sent transports of workers to Germany and to Czenstochowa. My transport stopped at Radomsk, where I met

Shmuel Freedman and Moshe Kupersberg. We were sent to one place where we worked three days digging trenches to block the advance of the Russian tanks.

The cooler Elul days arrived. Despite all our troubles we knew it was Rosh Hashona. In a barn, where we slept after work, we crowded together and quietly repeated the prayers which a rabbi recited from memory. The same thing happened on Yom Kippur. Actually we wept silently rather than "davened." We didn't know whom to memorialize — the dead or those who were still living in this hell.

In November we finished the work on the trenches. They sent about 500 men to Czenstochowa, the rest to Leipzig. I was again put in Laskowski's group and we immediately set up a mill to grind potatoes. We didn't stay there long, however. The Russians were already breathing down the necks of the Germans. Another evacuation to Germany, every day another group. Meanwhile they locked us in a barracks. In the "infirmary" I met my townsmen Yehiel Stark, more dead than alive. I did everything I could to save him, but it was too late. He expired like a slaughtered pigeon.

Our camp was liquidated in two days. January 18, 1945 half the inmates were sent to Germany. On the way I met Bendet Katz's brother and son, former Jewish police. The Nazis packed a hundred men into a car. It was a long ride to Gliwice, and from there to Buchenwald, where I met Reuben Shadman, Moshe Cooperschmidt and others. Bendet Katz's brother was also there. After a trial, the Jewish underground sentenced him to death for his crimes. His nephew tried to defend him, but he too fell victim to the Nazis, who were hardly interested in saving the lives of their former helpers. In Buchenwald the Jewish underground was more visible, but it still encompassed only a limited number of the Jews there.

After ten days in Buchenwald I was sent to the camp at Dora, where I worked in the munitions factory. Previously they

had produced the secret weapons, "V 1 and 2," but now there was nothing to do there, so the brown beasts found other "work" for us — moving rocks from one side of the camp to the other. Finally, when the Allied bombings became more and more frequent, they sent us to Bergen-Belsen.

That was on April 2nd. The weather was chilly, especially at night. The cattle cars were open. We had very little strenght left; how we survived is hard to understand. Many did not. With staring eyes they continued to stand among the living, because there was no room for them to fall down. We had no fear of the dead, however; it was too familiar a sight for us by this time. Their faces were contorted into bizarre expressions. Often their hands were still resting on the living.

The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was crowded from one end to the other. The Germans drove us into attics with cement floors. Food was out of the question. We ate grass. We no longer did any work. Death was king here. We stepped over corpses. G-d was absent from Bergen-Belsen. Satan was everywhere. But on one there can be judged. The struggle for survival was too great for ordinary mortals.

Finally the long-awaited hour struck. British tanks rumbled into the camp. We were free .

UNDER THE NAZI BOOT

by Israel Friedman (Buenos Aires)

The first victim was Notte Richter, son of Zisl the butcher. They shot him near the Talmud Torah when they found him walking in the street one minute after six. Following that, there was one victim after another.

Despite all the suffering, all the fear and pain, Jews went to the synagogue in the evening for Kol Nidre, at the risk of life. The next morning, the Germans routed all the Jews from

their beds to sweep the streets around the city hall. Suddenly we noticed Two Polish hoodlums running to the Germans and pointing to the Rabbi's house. A few minutes later the Nazis were herding a group of Jews into the street with the rabbi at the head; they were all carrying brooms. One S.S.-man went over to the rabbi and cut off half his beard with a scissors. As I watched, I felt as if he were cutting off one of my limbs.

After we had been sweeping for a while, they lined us up and led us all the way through town to the fish-market, where they kept us sweeping until they brought in another *shtibl* of Jews. Then they let us go. This continued all day long. Nevertheless, Jews again risked their lives and went to the synagogue for services.

At midnight, when everyone was asleep, we heard a banging on the shutters: All Jews must come out at once with buckets. We barely managed to get our clothes on. Out in the street, a blazing fire hit us in the face. The synagogue and the Talmud Torah were in flames. The Germans had started the fire and then called us out to extinguish it. So we stood there, all the Jews in Szydlowiec, at the end of Yom Kippur, trying to put out the fire with buckets of water. That was our first Yom Kippur under the Nazi terror.

Not a week went by without its victims. One day, Henech Paperosnikov's son was selling cigarettes at the fair, naturally at a higher price than that set by the German authorities. A Folksdeutsch (his name was Bulner) noticed this and would have shot him, but the boy dropped his wares in the street and ran. Bulner became so enraged that he started shooting wildly in all directions. People scattered. I happened to be walking to the marketplace from the *Shulgass* when I heard a cry behind me: "Run! Bulner is going crazy!" I ducked into a building, ran up the steps and opened the first door I came to. I didn't even know who lived there. The windows were curtained. Through the cracks we could see the wild beast running around

with his machine-gun. Yehezkel Farber was coming out of Yosi's bakery with a loaf of bread in his hand. Bulner shot him on the spot. This was not enough for him, however. He still kept running around, looking for victims. Luckily, he found no one else and finally went over toward Radom Road. We breathed a little easier. But the next day, Henech's son had to report to the police. They shot him for his "crime."

Episodes like these followed one after the other. I don't remember the exact dates, but the circumstances are burned into my memory. One day S.S.-man Mandel came from Radom with his aide, Swietko, to inspect Jewish homes. At Leybl Eisenberg's son-in-law's they found some leather. They arrested him and were about to shoot him when his father-in-law (Buzak) started pleading with them: "Take me instead, I'm an old man." They obliged him and shot both Eisenberg and his son-in-law.

Another time Mandel and Swietko came to inspect the bakeries. At Dana Frankel's house (Perl Malkele's son) they found several loaves more than the "norm." They took Dana, and his wife, and a neighbor (Zalman Fried's mother) into the courtyard and shot all three of them.

This went on until 1942, when they took hundreds of Szydłowiec Jews (I was one of them) and sent us to Skarzysko. Two years later they sent us to Czenstochowa, where we stayed until January 16, 1945, the day of our liberation. On that day the Christian population danced, rejoiced, looted — it was their liberation too. But I felt as if I had been reborn. The world looked completely different to me. I felt as if I were in a foreign country. It seemed as if every person who passed by was looked daggers at me, surprised that there was even one Jew still left alive.

After thinking about it for a few days, I decided to go home to Szydłowiec, hoping to find someone from my family. But where my parents home had once stood, nothing remained

but a pile of grass. The whole town looked like a cemetery. The handful of Szydlowiec Jews who were left — from the camps, from the hiding-places — wanted to settle in their home town again, but a few weeks later the Poles in the Armia Krajowa decided that too many Jews survived the war. One night they started firing their weapons at us. Fortunately they didn't hit anyone. We felt that we couldn't stay there another day and fled to the larger cities, most of us to Lodz. That was the end of the beautiful kehilla once known as Szydlowiec.

I write these lines in memory of my dear parents, Moshe and Dina, and my two young brothers, Yudel and Yekutiel, whose lives were so brutally cut short by the Nazis.

SAVED BY A WELL

by Moshe Kunovski

In order to avoid the continuing roundups in the ghetto, my brother-in-law Velvl devised a plan for a hiding-place in the well located courtyard of my father-in-law Abraham Charnes Wasserstein. We started working on it right away, digging a tunnel to a wall in the upper section of the wall, at a higher point than the surface of the water.

On the day of the first deportation we went down into the hiding-place early in the morning. There were 14 of us. We could not stay there very long, so half of us left this bunker one night and made our way to the camp at Wolonow. My brothers Sender, Shmuel, Avromele, and Yankele were there. After a few weeks the Germans carried out a selection and a mass execution. Most of the victims were Szydlowiecers, among them Zalman Salztreger, Rivka Kriss and her daughter, Velvl Wasserstein (my brother-in-law), Fishele Kurlander, Fishel Rabinowicz, Shmuel Citrenbaum, Israel Schwarzfuter, Avrom Modzevietski, Shimon Blatman, Benjamin Levin, my brother

Sender, Shiya Lederman, Yehezkel Lichtiker, Toybe Rosenbaum.

After the mass execution I escaped and went back to Szydlowiec where (according to the Germans) a “new ghetto” has been established. I soon realized that this was just another Nazi trap, so on the night of January 12, 1943 a group of us escaped — my brothers Avrom and Yankl, Aaron Sharfatz and his daughter (Toyba Rivka Nagelman) and a few others. For several days we hid in the barn of a friendly peasant in the village of Dligas. Then we had no choice but to go back to Wolonow, where we worked until the camp was liquidated in August 1943.

From there they deported us to Starchowicz, where my three brothers and I worked until 1944 in the carpenter shop. Yankele ran away from that camp, but was caught and killed. From Starchowitz we were sent to Auschwitz. In the first selection my brother Avrom perished. With me were Yitzhok Goldberg, Simcha Meir Vierzinskei and other Szydlowiecers.

In December 1944 they sent us to Buchenwald, where I met Meir Braniowski, Michael Gershonowicz, Shmuel Yankl Zucker, Moshe Lindzen and Ostrowiec. From there they sent us to Dachau, where we were liberated by the American army. After the liberation I met my brother Shmuel.

The cruelty of fate: My brother Shmuel, who had gone through all these fires of hell, later was killed in Los Angeles during a holdup in his store. The bandits finished what the Nazis started.

MY BROTHER'S FATE

by Isaac Moro

The wife of my only brother, Moshe-Ber, was deported to the Hasag concentration camp, where she died of hunger. My brother was left with his seven-year-old son. When I saw him

for the last time in January 1943 I pleaded with him: "Come with me. You too look like a Gentile. Together maybe we can survive. But on one condition: you must leave the child with the Christian woman to whom you have given all your possessions."

Moshe-Ber's reply was a categorical NO. "I will not leave this child with anyone!"

He then went to the hiding-place that he had been constructed in Abraham Charnes' well.

As long as I was in the Szydlowiec ghetto, hiding in the home of the Strieks, a Christian family, I helped my brother as much as I could. More than once I risked my life at night to bring him food and other things that he and the child needed. This went on for about two months, until some Poles sniffed out the hiding-place in the well. The lives of my brother and his child now hung by a hair. One night I went out and told him that he must immediately find another place. He did find one in the cellar of Notta Dasa's house.

I shall never forget an incident that happened while they were still in the ghetto, hiding in Chaim Goldberg's building. He and the child were walking in a back street and Mordkhele found some discarded shaving equipment. At that same moment I happened to meet them. The child said to me: "Uncle, I just found this little machine. I want to give it to you for a present. In case Papa and I don't stay alive, remember that I gave it to you . . ."

His words still scald me whenever I think of them.

My brother was hidden in the cellar from 1943 until April 1944. According to a report that I received from some Poles in Szydlowiec after the war, he took his son and left the hiding place one day in April to look for food. A Polish fireman named Juzek Posobkevicz noticed him and started yelling: "Moshku, stop!"

My brother picked up the boy and started running toward the cemetery. The Pole and two other firemen caught him and held him until the murderer Bauer arrived and shot him and the child on the spot.

IN OUR HIDING-PLACE

by Chaya Paris-Kornbroyt

When the roundings in Szydlowiec became more and more frequent, we built a hiding-place in the attic of our *sukkah*, which had once served this purpose during World War I and the Bolshevik invasion. Climbing up to it was not easy, but when your life is threatened you can do anything.

When the Germans ordered all the Jews, on Wednesday, September 23, to gather in one place, another order came from my mother: "We are not going to that place. We are going to the hiding-place. Right now!" Well, when Mother said something, we obeyed.

With us was Jacob Shimon, an older man. We took up a bucket of water, a couple of breads, a little sugar. My brother Abraham Jacob was the last one up, and closed the door. We were not too well prepared for such an "operation." The only thing we had managed to do was to arrange with Isaac Milstein that if he escaped the roundup, he should come up to our attic.

Through the cracks in the wall we could see the streets emptying out of people. What was happening at the *umschlagplatz* we didn't know. An hour passed, two, three. The silence became oppressive. Fear was everywhere. Suddenly, heavy footsteps on the stairs. Through a crevice Yankele could see an S.S.-man with a revolver in his hand. Yankele motioned to us to keep absolutely still. Finally, the S.S.-man turned back, but we heard them boarding up the door — our bunker had become a living grave.

The day dragged like an eternity. The roof was getting hotter and hotter under the sun. In the evening it cooled down, but what would happen the next day? Thirst was beginning to torment us. We had to be very sparing of what little water we had. According to our reckoning, we could hold out this way until Sunday.

Friday, erev Succos. My brother screwed up his courage, climbed down into the house and brought up some water. Through the cracks we could see the Germans leading groups of Jews somewhere. We could hear the weeping and the wailing.

Sunday my brother and I were supposed to take a chance and go to "reconnoitre," when we suddenly heard the door of our building being opened. Then we heard the boards being ripped off the attic door. We could hear people speaking in Yiddish. My brother opened the door — there was Isaac Milstein, with two Jewish policemen, Alter and Israel Katz, a Jewish coachman and the bandit Flaskata the fireman.

Who can describe that happy moment? Our rescuers looked to us like angels from heaven. They took us to Pinkert's block, which had become a new location for those who had come out of their hiding-places. The Germans ordered that Jews coming out of hiding should not be shot.

The state of affairs didn't last long, however. On the morning of Hoshana Raba, when the workers and the Jewish police, including Isaac Milstein, went out to work, they were met by German police and Ukrainians and taken to the camp at Skarzysko. The next day there was a selection. My brother and I were sent to a work group, but my parents . . . Mother could have saved herself, but she refused to be separated from my father. She had managed to say to us:

"You are still young. Stay together and don't forget us." The weeping of my parents at that terrible moment still rings in my ears.

We suffered in Skarzysko until 1944. From there we were sent to Czenstochowa. In the one selection at that camp my brother was sent to Bunchenwald, where he perished.

I was liberated on January 17, 1945 in the Pelzern concentration camp at Czenstochowa.

HASSIDIC UNDERGROUND IN SZYDLOWIEC

by Joseph Friedenson

(Matis and the Matisovtses)

In 1941-42, in the ghettos of Poland, in Warsaw, in Krakow, and in many other cities across the length and breadth of the "General Gouvernement," a certain religious youth movement known as "Matisovtses" became popular. Groups of young Hassidim, they defied the Nazi authorities and remained just as observant of their Judaism as they had before the German occupation.

The Germans had prohibited Jews from assembling, they closed all the *hedorim*, yeshivas and Hassidic shtiblech. Despite this, the Matisovtses organized their own shtiblech and study houses and continued their study of Torah day and night.

Whenever they caught a young Jew with beard and *payess*, the Germans tormented him, cut off his beard, tore the side-curls out of his head. But the Matisovtses refused to give up. They let their beards and *payess* grow again, which was itself a courageous act of resistance.

The Germans began mobilizing young Jews to work in their war industry. The Jews would have preferred, of course, not to work for the Germans at all, but hunger and the risk of being caught by the Nazi murderers compelled them to register for these jobs. The Matisovtses did not do so, however. Their orders were never to report for this work voluntarily; the

Matisovtse organization would provide for the basic needs of its members.

The Germans kept close watch on all Jewish organizations, but the Matisovtses continued to conduct their activities in secret — their couriers traveled from one center to another; orders and commands were issued; new members were recruited, new cells created; funds were collected for self-help, for the old, the sick and the abandoned.

Although they were a continuation of the young Hassidim who, prior to the war, were concentrated around the Gerer shtiblech, they were really a new movement in Hassidic life. The name “Matisovtse” was certainly a brand new one, but it quickly became popular. Some people admired their courage, their self sacrifice, their piety and their stubbornness in maintaining their Judaism in face of such extreme peril. Others silently ridiculed them: “What insanity! At such a time, to let their beards and *payess* grow, to sit and study at the risk of life.” Still others felt sorry for these “*batlonim*,” these impractical people. No one, however, could remain indifferent to them. For friends and scoffers alike they were indubitably original and mysterious, and “the Matisovtses” became a household word.

Nevertheless, there were only a few people who knew how the Matisovtses got their name. There were active Matisovtse groups in Warsaw and Krakow, in Miechow and in Pinczew and in dozens of other towns and cities, but almost no one there knew the origin of the name. For Szydlowiec Jews, however, it was no riddle. They knew that these young Hassidim were named for their mysterious “commander,” Matis Gelman, or Matis Viener, as he was more commonly known. Matis had married a Szydlowiec girl and had been living in our town for a few years prior to the war.

Who was he? How did he suddenly become the commander of an army that bore his name? Where did he get

the strength to become the leader of a revolutionary army of hundreds of young men whom he inspired, although many of them had never even heard of him before and later never even met him. Many of these questions are difficult to answer. Much about Matis remained a mystery and he took many of these secrets with him to his unknown grave.

All we know is that he began his young life with a revolt against his parents, a rebellion that was quite unlike the one then common among young Jews of that period. Most young Jews in those years rebelled against the piety and restrictiveness of their parents' ways, as they strove for freedom. Matis, however, went the opposite way.

He was born in Vienna to modern Europeanized parents. His father did not send him to a heder but to a modern *gymnazie*, where Matis was a distinguished student in German, French, music and sports. But he was searching for another path. The bright lights of Europe did not beckon to him. Freedom became too confining for him. As soon as he grew up he turned away from his modern parents and became a pious, God fearing Jew. There are various versions of how this took place.

One version has it that in the *gymnazie* a fellow student called him "dirty Jew." This was after Hitler had come to power — Matis was then only sixteen — and many Viennese gentiles had already begun to cast longing glances in the direction of Hitler, who promised to unite Austria with a "greater Germany." Anti-Semitism had grown more open and Jewish children in gentile schools were the first to feel it.

Mati — as they called him in Vienna — was so shaken by this insult that he was ashamed to go home. As he roamed the streets of Vienna, he happened to notice a crowd of Jews at the railroad station. He stopped to see what was going on and it turned out that they were waiting for the world renowned Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin, who had been blessed with such

a majestic appearance that young Matis found himself trying to get through the crowd to greet the "Polnisher Rabbiner." According to this version, Matis approached the Lubliner rabbi and asked him:

"Herr Rabbiner, I have a question: Why do the gentiles call us 'dirty Jew'?"

The rabbi invited him to his hotel room. The substance of the conversation between the two is not known to us, but what we do know is that Matis joined the youth group of Agudat Israel in Vienna, where they taught him the Hebrew alphabet, the prayers, Bible and Talmud, and it wasn't long before Mati was a student at the Lublin yeshiva, where they gave him the name Matis Viener.

He studied there for a few years. For the holidays he no longer went home to his parents but to the Gerer rebbe. In Ger, a friendship developed between him and the Gerer rebbe, who spent more time with him than with the other students. This in itself became a sign to the Gerer Hassidim that Mati would be a leader. The small group of Hassidim who knew him most closely said that Matis' grasp of Hasidim was unparalleled.

This distinction was expressed in Matis' singular piety and in his tremendous zeal. A taciturn young man, Matis "counted his words" and rarely left his quarters. But the more withdrawn he became, the more the young Hassidim began to seek him out, to catch a word from his lips, a Hassidic thought from his head. Thus he gradually became a "rebbe," a Hassidic guide, for a certain group of young men to whom he explained and interpreted the ideas of the Gerer rebbe. He showed them the way to grow into real Hassidim.

The Gerer movement in Poland had thousands of young Hassidim in its ranks who were concentrated in the shtiblech throughout Congress Poland. As Matis' popularity grew, he became a sort of national leader of the Gerer youth throughout the whole country. Their local leaders (called "commandants")

used to visit Matis to discuss their problems. Whenever a dispute broke out anywhere among the young Gerer Hassidim Matis was the "arbitrator." They also came to him with their own personal problems, such as marriage, or conflicts with parents or siblings.

This was not only because they knew that Matis had entree to the Gerer rebbe but also because he was an astute man with a keen mind that could analyze complex situations. Despite all this prominence and recognition, however, Matis did not put on airs. He refused to accept honors. Everyone spoke to him in an informal way. He was a combination of rebbe and friend, and this was probably his great attraction.

Several months before the war broke out, Matis married Dina Blumenthal, daughter of Yehezkel Blumenthal, a Gerer Hassid in Szydlowiec. With his arrival in Szydlowiec, Gerer Hassidism there was immediately strengthened. The mere fact that Matis lived there transformed Szydlowiec into a central point on the map of Gerer Hassidism in Poland. Actually, Matis did not "settle" in Szydlowiec. Soon after his wedding he began traveling back and forth between Szydlowiec and Ger, and he quickly became a national figure in the Gerer movement far beyond the borders of Szydlowiec.

I have not been able to discover where Matis was when the war erupted. One version has him in Ger, preparing to stay with the rebbe over the high holidays. But two weeks before Rosh Hashonah, when the war broke out, the Gerer rebbe went off to Warsaw and Matis went home to Szydlowiec. As soon as the battles ended he went back to Warsaw. He was one of the few individuals with access to the Gerer rebbe, who had been hidden away from the Germans.

Exactly when and how Matis began organizing the Hassidim in the ghettos into a kind of spiritual resistance movement is also not known. Jews in the ghettos, however, began to notice a central plan and leadership in the way the

young Gerer Hassidim were organized. First of all, they did not run away from their shtiblech. The older Hassidim, when the Germans closed their shtiblech, met in private homes, but they went to whichever house was closest. The young Gerer, however, stayed together and met wherever they could, but they didn't allow themselves to be dispersed. They maintained their organized groups for worship and study; they continued to wear the Hassidic garb, despite the objections of their parents that it exposed them to persecution by the Germans.

The new situation confronted the young Hassidim with new problems and they went to great lengths to overcome them. Refugees came to Jewish communities with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The Gerer youth made it their business to seek out among these refugees people of their movement, to learn what their specific needs were, to get them settled, to bring them into their own spiritual world. Gerer families who came into a city where there was a youth group knew they had someone to help them.

The Gerer youth also concerned themselves with ransoming captives. Here and there a Gerer Hassid would be rounded up by the Germans and sent to a labor camp; the youth groups would collect money for ransom or for food packages. Nor did they limit their charitable work to their own people. In seeking to do "chesed" (deeds of mercy) — which is one of the important Jewish mitzvot — they would do various good deeds, as for example, providing for an old or sick refugee who had no one else to look after him. I recall one such case in Szydlowiec. An old Hassid from Lodz lay sick in a broken-down room. People around him were so beset by their own troubles that there was no one to take care of him. I reported this to the Matisovtses and for a number of weeks they brought him food, a clean shirt, etc.

All this, of course, grew out of their religious and Hassidic beliefs, but they were directed and inspired by a central figure,

Matis Viener, who was a kind of "invisible" man and who, even during the war years, kept shuttling between Szydlowiec and Warsaw. Though Matis tried to keep this a secret, he did not succeed, so after a while people began to call these Gerer Hassidim (or "Gerer Cossacks, as they were previously known) — Matisovtses.

Matis himself was either in Szydlowiec or in Warsaw, but he knew exactly what was going on everywhere else. He had his own couriers, through whom he sent instructions to his "troops." They collected money in one city and distributed it in another — to poor young Hassidim, to a sick scholar, to needy people. Matis knew how all his Hassidim everywhere were behaving, how their studies were going. From time to time he would steal into a town to strengthen the group there, to help them plan their religious and charitable activities, the education of their young children.

It goes without saying that one of the strongest groups in the Matisovitz movement was in Szydlowiec itself. First of all, Matis himself organized the group, appointed its leaders and recruited many young men, even non-Gerer Hassidim. Second, his presence in Szydlowiec attracted many young Gerer from other places. The Szydlowiec Matisovtses welcomed these "refugees" with open arms and helped them organize their lives. Some of them even found wives there. The Matisovtses were well known in Szydlowiec; you could recognize them by their dress. They had many friends and many opponents, but almost everyone treated them with respect — these "stubborn fanatics" who refused to recognize the "new regime."

(The Matisovtses in Szydlowiec are described in detail in the memoirs of Ozer Grundman, former Szydlowiec who now lives in Israel. Editor)

I myself saw Matis Viener in Ger only once before the war — he was pointed out to me as one of the "commandants." The second time I saw him it was in Szydlowiec in the very

midst of his secret and courageous activities. It was in March 1942, three months after I came to Szydlowiec from the Warsaw Ghetto. I had heard something about Matis' work even before Warsaw. But Matis was not in Szydlowiec and no one knew where he was.

One day, however, my brother-in-law Motele Silberman, himself a Matisovtse, whispered a secret into my ear: "Matis came from Warsaw yesterday and wants to see you. He has regards for you from your parents." This was astounding. Matis came from Warsaw? How was that possible? Since January 1942 any Jew caught traveling from one city to another faced the death penalty, unless he had a special pass. I couldn't believe that Matis would have such a pass; they were issued only to those who worked directly for German industry. But Matis was a young Hassid with beard and *payess* — how could he have such a pass?

I met him in his father-in-law's dark shtibl. He looked just like I remembered him from Ger — a jet-black beard up to his eyes, long side-curls never touched by a scissors. Even wearing a long *kapote*. How had he traveled from Warsaw to Szydlowiec? By train? By bus? I got no answers to my questions, except authentic indications that only a week before he had seen my father in the Warsaw ghetto, and not only my father, but a whole list of other friends. In addition to the greetings Matis had only a few words for me:

"I'm leaving in a few days and I want to ask you to help our boys. They are wonderful young people, but sometimes they may be in need of help. Your father-in-law is a rich man — see that he helps them."

There was a tone of command in his voice, even though he spoke informally (as the Hassidim do), and although we had never met before.

Where Matis went from Szydlowiec, I don't know. But from eyewitness accounts gathered by Moshe Prager in his

book, "Those That Didn't Submit," it is evident that during the months before the Germans began liquidating the Jewish communities of Poland, Matis had traveled to a number of towns and cities. Wherever he went he appeared as if from nowhere, brought regards to various people, called "the boys" and their leaders together, spoke to them, and then disappeared. Wherever he could, he collected money. Wherever it was needed, he brought it. In this conspiratorial way he led a whole army of young Jews whose spirit "the scourge of the Jews" was unable to break, even at the last moment before their final liquidation.

* * *

According to Moshe Prager's book, Matis Viener perished in a bunker in Krakow together with a large group of Matisovtses who were hiding there up to the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto. But he left behind him a bit of a legacy even in the camps. Many of the Matisovtses who were imprisoned in the camps continued stubbornly to maintain their Jewish way of life, to the best of their ability, even under the most difficult conditions. Whenever a few of them found themselves together in the same place they helped each other and supported each other so that the anguish of their oppression would not make them lose "the image of G-d."

The activities of the Matisovtses and the spirit which they planted in the hearts of hundreds of young Jews also had a great influence on the revival of Judaism among the survivors after the war. Former Matisovtses or their friends were the first to organize kashrut in the DP camps, to open houses of worship, *hedorim*, yeshivas and to establish religious kibbutzim for those who wanted to emigrate to Eretz Israel.

If the Ger movement has today become one of the largest Hassidic movements, much of that success is due to the

Matisovtses. In the very abyss of the Destruction, in the ghettos, Matis Viener sowed the seeds of a Jewish religious revival, of which we today are the witnesses wherever Jews live.

EPISODES IN OUR TORMENT

by Isaiah Henig

In Benjamin Fried's house there was a bakery. The baker used to buy flour from my father. Summer 1942 several Germans came into the bakery looking for flour or baked bread. When they discovered that the oven was a little warm they accused the baker of having baked bread that day. They took him and Fried's wife to the old Jewish cemetery, taunted these two innocent victims, made them sing love songs, hold hands and dance. Then they shot them both.

My friends Pinchas Rosenblum and Israel Milstein, together with five other young Jews, were caught by the Germans outside the borders of the ghetto. They had escaped from a labor camp twenty kilometers from Szydlowiec and were on their way home. The Nazis brought them into town and shot them.

Erev Pesach 1942 the labor authority ordered a hundred young Jews to appear the next morning outside the city hall. When the young men came and saw the trucks there, they ran. The Germans, assisted by armed Ukrainians, caught many of them and put them into the trucks. Among them was our rabbi, Chaim Rabinowicz, whom they dragged out of the house in the middle of his prayers. They beat him across the head and face with their billyjacks. The rabbi's blood spurted out on his tallis and his clothing, but he took the blows without flinching. He did not cover his face with his hands. He made no attempt to ward off the blows. He did not utter a sound, not a word, not even a groan. He hoped to be a sacrifice for the

Jewish community. The rabbi's behavior affected even his tormentors; they stopped beating him and told him to go home.

In the ghetto and camps I often thought about the Germans: what they once were and what they had become. I also thought about our Christian neighbors and their attitude toward Jews during that terrible time. I recalled an incident of my childhood years in the *heder*, when the rebbe was studying with us the bible story about the Amalakites and the awful things they did to the Jews of those ancient days. Once we asked the rebbe who the descendants of those Amalakites were. Without hesitation he replied: "The Germans." He told us how the Germans wiped out old Jewish communities, that other nations had also pogromized Jews, but that the Germans were the worst.

When I repeated this to my parents, they explained to me that the rebbe was living in the past, that what he had said about Germany is true, but it happened many centuries ago, when the Church was the greatest power in Europe. The Church taught the people that the Jews had killed their Lord, that the Jews are damned because they refuse to see the light and do penance for their sins by accepting Christianity. The priests falsely accused the Jews of murdering Christian children for their blood, which they used in baking matzo.

But today — my parents said — we are living in the 20th century and the world is different. There are universities and libraries; people are no longer blind. The power of the Church and her influence over the population has been broken, the masses of people in every country, including Germany, have become liberal. We must forget the past and look to the future.

And now the "future" is here — and we see what the Germans really look like and what the Christians around us look like and what they do to Jews.

The Jews in Szydłowiec, as in other communities in Poland, had close relationships with their Christian neighbors. Jews sold their products to Christians and bought from them what they had produced. Jews gave employment to Christian workers in their factories. My parents had business relationships with Christian families, especially with two families in Smilew, a village 2-3 kilometers away. The men were my father's friends; their wives were my mother's friends; their children were my friends.

When the situation in our home became so bad that we began to go hungry, my mother sent me to our Christian friends with an urgent plea that they pay us some of what they owed us with a little food. Our friends told me, first, that they didn't owe us any money, and second, they warned me not to come there any more, because if other Christians denounce me to the Germans, they would shoot me.

A few months after my visit to Smilew a Christian woman from that village came and asked us to make something for her. She said she would pay us in food. My mother asked her: "Why have you Christians forgotten your Jewish neighbors, friends and fellow citizens? Why are you so indifferent to our suffering? Why don't you help us? Jews and Christians have lived together in Poland for hundreds of years. Jews fought for Poland, were killed for Poland. Jews helped to build this country. Now you don't know us. You and I have been friends for so many years. Now my family is hungry. You have so much. Why don't you help me? I'm not even asking you to give it to me for nothing. Your husband owes us money. Pay me some of it in food . . . "

And this is how our Christian friend of long standing answered my mother:

"I don't know whether my husband owes you any money or not. I never mix into my husband's business. And you Jews have no right to make demands on us. The truth is, you don't

even have any right to condemn those criminal Germans. Sarah, my friend, believe me, I am heartsick over this, but the truth is that G-d is punishing you for killing Christ. The accursed Germans are only heaven's instruments, and we Polish Christians are suffering because of you Jews."

That woman was not an anti-Semite. She was a devout Catholic. The Church had taught her that the Jews killed Christ. The masses of Poles were under the influence of the Church. It is a tragic fact that centuries of preaching hatred against Jews the Church prepared the soil for the German slaughter of the Jewish people.

In our house things continued to worsen. There was nothing to eat. My father had died. My mother was weak and sickly. My sister Beyla was 17, my brother was a young boy. It was up to me to be the breadwinner. Not that my brother complained, no matter how bad he felt. He understood our bitter situation and handled it like a grownup. One morning, when he was changing his underwear, I noticed what the ghetto had done to him. His little body was like a stick; you could count the ribs. At that moment I made up my mind that my family would no longer suffer hunger.

I started tanning leather with the help of my friend Yisroelke Milstein. We risked our lives every time we did the work, until finally the Gestapo caught us, confiscated the leather and arrested us. Then a miracle happened. They let us go — in exchange for a large sum of money. My friends and neighbors begged me not to do it again. Yisroelke agreed with them, so I continued alone, with my sister's help. I bribed the Polish informers. But I produced the leather until the day the Nazis dragged me to the camp at Starchowicz. That was the last time I saw my family.

From Starchowicz they sent me to Auschwitz. There were more than 5000 Gypsies there, living in two barracks. Generally, men and women inmates were segregated, but the Gypsies were allowed to live together in families. They could move about more freely than others in the camp. My third day there I watched as Dr. Mengele, along with several other German doctors, ordered the Gypsies to line up outside their barracks. That same night all 5000 of them were taken to the gas chambers.

OUT OF THE TRAP

by Berl Krajevski

It is difficult to describe what Szydlowiec looked like after the first deportation. It was impossible to find a house or a building without smashed doors and windows. Everything was in ruins. As soon as the Jews were put in the trains, the Christian neighbors began their looting. And that was the sight that met us in the “Zaulkes” when the Germans “resettled” us — about 1500 people from Radom — and it was here that we had to live. With no other alternative, we went right to work, patching up the holes with whatever we could find. We pasted together the broken bricks and stones with some clay and made a kitchen to cook our food in. Thus our new “life” began — a life of fear and of death.

Every day brought new arrivals, until soon there were 5000. And since there wasn't enough room in the “Zaulkes” for so many people, the Germans moved us into the tanneries, where the houses were still in one piece and still occupied by Poles. Only one tannery was operating — Notte Eisenberg's. The Poles moved out and we moved in. I lived in Isaac Garber's house with another 26 people. With me were Abraham

Gritchman and his wife. Because of the crowded and unnatural living conditions, a typhus epidemic resulted. We had no idea why they had brought us here from Radom.

In December 1942 they brought in people who had been working in the nearby factories. They looked wretched and were too weak to work any more. Now everyone understood why the Germans had brought us here.

On the evening of January 7, 1943 the city's uniformed firemen appeared in the street. It was an alarming sight, because in all the roundups the firemen took an active part. That day we had heard rumors that the freight cars were already waiting. Optimists among us interpreted this to mean that the trains were for the wheat the Germans were confiscating from the farmers. That night I could have gotten out, because we were not yet under guard, but where could a Jew go in those days? The next morning we were surrounded by Ukrainians, Polish police and German gendarmes. They herded us into the area with those Jews who still remained in the Zaulkes.

Thanks to the fact that the trains were late in arriving, I got out of the trap on Saturday night, January 10, 1943. Tuesday the 13th, Szydlowiec was no longer a Jewish town.

A RADOM "AKTSIE" IN SHIDLOVTSE

by Leah Shchenshlive-Eisenberg

When World War II broke out I was in Radom. I suffered in the ghetto along with all the other Jews there. On March 20, 1943, Untersturmfuehrer Schippers, the commandant of the Radom ghetto, came to the Chairman of the Judenrat, Dr. Nahum Shenderovicz, and demanded a list of the Jewish "intelligentsia" and their families. As a result, a rumor spread

quickly that these people would be exchanged for Germans in Palestine.

Schippers had demanded “only” 40 names, but the number of registrants was 150. They were told to prepare for a long journey, but were permitted to take with them only small bundles and valuables. Many Jews came to the gathering place who were not among those chosen, waiting for an opportunity to slip into the ranks of this “lucky” group.

The next day, at two in the afternoon, Untersturmfuehrer Kafka, commander of the Ukrainians, arrived with two large busses. Some Jews who were not on the registration list, along with their families, actually got into the busses. But the busses did not go to the railroad station. They went to Szydłowiec, followed by a truck carrying armed Ukrainian guards. Now the Jews understood why Schippers, at the last moment, had crossed certain familiar names off the list — Dr. Shenderovicz, Dr. Kleinberger, and the Jewish police commander Sitner. It was another Nazi trick.

The busses stopped at the Szydłowiec Jewish cemetery. The victims were driven out of the vehicles, ordered to take their clothes off, and were lined up in three rows. After the first row was marched into the cemetery, we heard the shots. I was with a group in another truck. When the Ukrainians shot the first group, they dragged us out of the truck and lined us up at the fence. They took our valuables and made us take off our clothes.

At this point, Untersturmfuehrer Kafka recognized Bella Freedman, whom he knew, and ordered her to step out of line. After a few minutes, I did the same, along with a few others. In this manner, 17 of us were “reprieved” at the last moment. All the rest are buried in the Szydłowiec cemetery in graves which they themselves had dug before they were shot.

A KITCHEN FOR REFUGEES

by Elka Schreiberberg

At the beginning of the war, many refugees came to Szydlowiec, not only from nearby towns but from places like Lodz, Warsaw, Krakow, because they thought it was a "safer" place than the large cities where they were living. In our building there were about a hundred refugees who needed food and shelter. Several of us — Freydl, Chavele Shteirman, Chanele Zimmerman, myself and few others whose names I don't remember — collected loaves of bread and other food, as well as clothing, for these refugees.

We also helped Isaac Steinman set up a soup kitchen for them. We asked Opatowski the baker to give us a couple of rooms in his building for the kitchen. He agreed. His daughter Elka and others helped to prepare the meals. The food was contributed by individuals. At first, about ten young women ran the kitchen, then Opatowski volunteered to run it and we continued to help him.

OUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

by Nече Katz

When it became clear that the Germans were preparing to liquidate the Szydlowiec ghetto, my fiance, Berl Burchinsky, his sister, my sister, and Yitzhak Sharfhartz's family went down into a bunker to hide. There were about twenty of us there, including six young children.

It is impossible to describe the days we spent in that hiding-place, with the murderers sniffing around outside with guard-dogs and parents holding their hands over the mouths of their children to prevent them from uttering a sound.

When we left the bunker, hungry and exhausted, we were stunned to find not Germans but Polish firemen and police. They stole everything from us and led us to the block where we found all the Szydlowiec Jews who had been in hiding.

Mrs. Sharfhartz later took the money and jewelry she had managed to hide and went to the home of a pious Christian who used to work for her, believing that he would provide her with a hiding-place in exchange for the valuables. An hour later she was back, half-naked and bruised. The Pole had gladly let her in and taken the valuables from her. Then he beat her and threw her out into the street . . .

CATHOLIC “LOVE”

by Jeremiah Meyerfeld

Next to my father, my brother Mendl was the best builder in the area. When the Nazis came and our troubles started, he immediately began thinking of ways to save his children, who were in the greatest danger. He took his two young, blond children in his arms and went to the Polish construction workers whom he had employed for many years. He begged them to take the children into their homes, maybe they would survive.

The reply of these hospitable Catholics was that they would soon be living in his house anyway.

And that's what actually happened. Not only did they kill their victims but they inherited their property . . .

A JEWISH POLICEMAN NAMED GLATT

by Wolfe Eisenberg

One of the ghetto policemen was a man named Glatt. He himself was far from “*glatt*.” He was a riddle to everyone. No

one knew where he came from. Some said Posen. Not only did he speak an excellent German but he even looked like a “real Aryan” — blond, tall, strong. No one would ever have suspected him of being a Jew.

The Judenrat was afraid of him. He used to “pal around” with the Germans and didn’t hesitate to speak to the Judenrat members as if he really were a German.

After the liquidation of Szydlowiec, Glatt was sent to the ghetto in Wolonow, where my brother and I had gone “illegally.” The very first day that Glatt was put in charge of our group of workers, he spotted us. He began beating us and yelling: “Get out! Get away from here! This place is not for you!” Later we found out he was right: it was a very bad place.

Another time, five Szydlowiecers in Wolonow were stricken with typhus. The doctor, a Jew from Pshytik who gave Jews a lot of trouble, placed them in isolation. When Glatt found out about this, he went over to the little window of the isolation ward and told the five men to climb up to the attic and hide. The doctor happened to overhear him. He called over an S.S.-man, who promptly put a bullet in Glatt’s heart.

The riddle of Glatt was solved for me . . .

BOY IN THE GHETTO

by Moshe Cooperberg (Rio)

I was 15 years old when the Germans entered Szydlowiec. My brother Shmuel Yankl was caught during a roundup for forced labor and sent to Skarzysko. He was killed there by a bullet from an Ukrainian’s gun.

During the first deportation I was among 500 Jews taken to the railroad station, but I managed to escape. Hiding day and night, I was one of about 80 Jews left behind by the Nazis to “clean up” the ghetto. The work was hard and nerve-wracking.

On the first day we buried a hundred murdered Jews. After that, a few every day.

We worked for six weeks, then they sent us to Skarzysko and finally to Buchenwald. In April 1945 the Germans packed about 1200 Jewish camp inmates into sealed cattle cars and rode us around for fourteen days, with almost nothing to eat or drink. When we stopped at Mauthausen, less than 200 of the 1200 were alive.

The Americans liberated us on May 5, 1945. At that time I weighed about 90 pounds. If they had come only a few days later it would have been too late for me.

(written by Baruch Majavka)

FROM SZYDLOWIEC TO AUSCHWITZ

by Toba Semyaticki-Sharfartz

During the German air-raids everyone in Szydlowiec ran to hide in cellars or other places. In our house there was a large, well constructed cellar where many of our neighbors came seeking safety with my parents Aaron and Devorah, my Grandmother Feygl-Libe and Grandfather Yitzhok. My great-grandmother Hannah-Sarah was paralyzed, so my father had to carry her into the cellar. People were crying, many were reciting psalms. Others said: "Let the German come in, at least it will be quiet." My father, however, said: "I'd be willing to suffer here in the cellar for six months if it meant that the Germans would be defeated and not come here at all."

The next day the Germans were already in Szydlowiec.

The Last few months of 1939, things were still tolerable. But then came their murderous tricks — the roundups, the "contributions," etc.

One day we received an urgent message from the Szydłowiec residents who had been sent to the camp: they were starving to death. The Relief Committee collected various food products to send to them; but no one offered to bring it to them, it was too dangerous. My father volunteered to do it.

In 1942 the Germans were advancing from one victory to another in Russia. The hope that they would meet their ultimate defeat there receded further and further. More and more often we heard rumors that entire Jewish communities in the Lublin area were being deported, some people said to labor camps, others said to death. At that time my mother took sick and died. We did not know yet how great a "privilege" it was to die a natural death.

In mid-1942 the Germans broke into my grandfather's house while a group of Jews were worshipping there. The Nazis beat everyone, pushed them into a truck and drove to Skarzysko, where people were being poisoned by chemicals used at their work. My uncle died there after a short time. His young wife Rachel and their two beautiful children were sent to Treblinka in September 1942 along with my Grandfather and Grandmother.

My father and I were lucky enough to be sent to hard labor at Starchowicz. We were glad to be together, at least. When we sensed that the noose was tightening here too, we went to Wolonow, where we worked under terrible conditions. Then they sent us to Blizin and from there to Auschwitz. Before Auschwitz I still had the indescribable good fortune of seeing my dear father from time to time, even though we were in different barracks. But in Auschwitz I lost even that last consolation. The last time I saw him it was through the barbed wire fence. He saw me too. The Nazis beat him savagely. I had to watch it and not even cry. In 1945 he was sent to Germany. On the way, he collapsed and died.

CAUGHT IN THE TRAP

by Mindja Rotberg-Citrinbaum

On a late-Elul day in 1942 we heard that the Germans were rounding up people for forced labor. In our house everyone ran down to the hiding-place. I stayed behind because I was certain that they wouldn't bother a girl as young as me.

How mistaken I was! When they came into our house and found no one there but me, they took me in spite of all my weeping and protesting.

All the Jews rounded up were sent to the camp at Skarzysko. Before we left, my sister Feygele noticed me in line and tried to hand me a package. And although she was pregnant, a policeman hit her in the stomach and knocked her down. That was the last time I saw her.

For three weeks I stayed in touch with my parents in Szydlowiec through a peasant who was well paid for his services. Then my parents were caught in the deportation to Treblinka.

FROM HIDING-PLACE TO CAMP

by Yehuda Leybl Monk

When the news spread that our shtetl was about to be deported, we prepared in various ways to avoid the tragedy. The best way, we thought, was to hide somewhere.

The day after Yom Kippur (it was a Tuesday), I hung around the city hall trying to find a way to save my parents, because I already had a good hiding-place for myself with Abraham Wasserstein. Some people were going to Wolonow, some to Starchowicz and some to Lipowe-Pole, which was a temporary labor camp. Many did not believe that it would come to a deportation. Among those who went to Starchowicz

was my present wife, Sonia Lederman and her two sisters Rochtsia and Sabina. My friend Tselnickner went to Wolonow.

Wednesday before dawn we were awakened by sounds of the "fire-brigade." It was too late to flee the city — it was now surrounded by Ukrainian guards and others. I rushed down to the tannery, where we had built a bunker in the well.

Very carefully I lowered myself down through a pipe that began at the pump and had a cover outside only big enough for a bucket. The hiding-place was built a little higher than the water line and was dug out like a tunnel and lined with boards.

No one would ever have thought to look in such a place for human beings, but 14 of us were hiding there, including my father-in-law, Shaya Lederman, Moshe Kunovsky, the Nagelman family, Velvl Wasserstein and a few others.

This was the only hiding-place where water was no problem. But we had very little to eat. At night we risked our lives to go out to relieve ourselves.

When we ran out of food we had to leave the hiding-place. Besides the hunger pangs, we were suffering from the dampness.

It was a Saturday night when we all left the bunker to try to get to the Wolonow camp, where there were many other Szydlowiecers. With us were the children of Shlomo Nagelman.

After walking all night we arrived at Wolonow. The barracks there were separate for men and women. The work consisted of building military barracks. I was assigned to work at Baran's of Radom, which was later taken over by the Mephra company.

One day Camp Fuehrer Ruber came to our barracks with the infamous Barkman and several of his helpers from the Sonderkommando who carried out the mass executions. They ordered everyone to line up for roll call. They walked up and down between the rows, selecting whoever they wished, and ordered them to stand to one side.

As we all stood there in mortal fear we heard an order over the loudspeaker: all workers in the Mephro firm must report to work immediately because a water-pipe had burst there. It turned out to be only a pretext by our good Master Bruner. He had known what was about to happen in the camp and with this ruse he had saved our lives.

From there we were sent to Radom, then to Gross-Saxonheim, then to Dachau. Near the town of Seifeld our guards fled.

We were free.

MY LAST LOOK AT OUR SHTETL

by Yankl Silberman

When we were liberated on May 9, 1945 we were in Theresienstadt. Although I was sick and very weak, my brother and I decided not to stay there and rest, but to go look for our wives and sisters. We had no idea where they were. Before we were separated at Skarzysko we agreed that if we survived we would meet in Szydlowiec. So we started walking toward our hometown. As we got closer to it and saw its first contours, our hearts beat faster.

We stopped at the city hall with our bundles and were immediately surrounded by crowds of Poles who stared at us as if we were some sort of freaks. One older woman recognized us. She had worked among Jews — putting wood on the fire on Shabbos, whitewashing the walls at Pesach-time — and she was always well paid for her work. She felt sorry for us and cursed the murderous Nazis. She took us to a Jewish home, where we found Hinda and Saul Zlatowicz and a few other survivors of his family. When they saw us they screamed as if we had come back from the next world.

We went to the cemetery and tearfully said kaddish at the graves of our parents.

In the section of Szydlowiec that had not been destroyed, the Jewish stores and homes had been taken over by Polish neighbors. We could see the hostility in their eyes. I knew that I couldn't stay here very much longer.

One day my wife Elka, my sister Malka, and my brother's wife Miriam appeared in Szydlowiec. Our reunion was indescribable. We fell into each other's arms and couldn't utter a word for a long time. Our sobs and tears spoke for us.

When the Poles saw the few survivors returning they started harassing us. We had thought we were liberated, but our former neighbors and the "Security Militia" were eager to finish what the Germans had not managed to do.

On the night before we left, a few of us were at the home of Israel Chustetski. (My family had already gone to Lodz.) Suddenly we heard loud shooting. The salvos sounded closer and closer. They were coming to murder us! We had no way of escaping. We stared at each other helplessly. At daybreak the shooting stopped.

Later we learned that it had been Poles giving us a warning to get out of the town we had lived in for many generations.

ON THE "ARYAN" SIDE

by Isaac Moro

In August 1939, when German-Polish relationships became very strained and the danger of war hung in the air, I was mobilized into the Polish army. From Lodz, where I lived at that time, our military unit was sent to Czenstochow. The Polish army quickly capitulated and my unit was captured. When they started marching us to Germany, I began thinking

of ways to escape. One dark night, between Demblin and Radom, I slipped out of line. The German guards fired at me, but I rolled down a hill and escaped.

Around eleven o'clock that night I knocked at the door of a peasant's cottage. Still in uniform, I asked the Polish farmer to let me spend the night in his house. Terribly frightened, he let me in, but only on condition that I leave at dawn. He not only gave me something to eat but also a suit of peasant clothing. Before I left I asked him if he had a document of some kind that he could give me. He searched and found something in the name of Czenkowicz.

That was in September 1939. By a series of back roads I finally got to Szydlowiec, where I stayed with my brother Moshe Ber and his family.

Disguised as a Christian, I was able to move around and do business, especially in Lodz. The most dangerous place was the railroad station at Kolucki, near Lodz, which was always guarded very closely and where people were searched and interrogated. Even with my "Aryan" pass I wanted to avoid this, so I lay down between the rails in the bitter cold and waited for a moment when the guards turned their backs, then I dashed into the station and bought a ticket. It was much safer, however, not to travel by train at all. I waited for a German army truck to come along. Showing the driver my ticket, I asked for a lift, with the excuse that I had missed my train. He let me in and dropped me off at Lodz.

In Lodz lived my oldest sister Alta-Feyge Hodes and her husband Leybush Modovietski, who had moved there in 1937. When the war broke out, Rochel Leah and her son Nachman came back to Szydlowiec. She lived in my home, because my parents had died — my father Abraham Mordecai in 1931 and my mother Sarah Dena in 1937. Before the first deportation Rochel Leah started out on the Jashtchemba Road and her last

words to me were: "I'm taking my child and I'm going, but I don't know where to."

I never heard from her again. My youngest sister Hannah-Sheva, who worked in the Hasag camp, was taken away in the first deportation from Skarzysko.

When the Germans occupied Szydlowiec I lived in the Shul-Gass with my wife Feyge-Toybe and our young daughter Dena. On September 23, 1942, when the order came for all the Jews to report to the Haymarket, I went out into the street with my wife and child. My wife said to me:

"Yitzhok, you don't have to go with us. For the Polish police you're not a Jew. Maybe you'll be of more help to us that way."

But I couldn't help them at all. They were among the many Jews later taken to the railroad station. I never heard from them again. On the first day of the deportation I went to a peasant whom I knew and stayed there two days, then I went back to Szydlowiec. The Germans had left a group of 80 Jews behind to "clean up" — picking up the murdered Jews from the streets and collecting the property that had been left in Jewish homes. This group was housed in Fishl Eisenberg's tannery and I managed to become part of it.

One day Bauer showed up while we are at work. Rapping me on the head with his stick, he presented me with an ultimatum: "You have until midnight tonight to show us where the hiding-places are. If you don't, you'll be shot."

Ten o'clock that evening the Polish commander came to my cell and asked me what I had decided to do. My answer was: "I don't know anything about such hiding-places, so I have nothing to tell you."

At midnight no one came for me, but six o'clock that morning, Ostrowiec, the head of the Jewish police, came and asked me the same question. He told me that at his request

Bauer had granted a delay of execution. He advised me to talk, otherwise my life would be in great danger.

That morning, when they took me to city hall, nobody asked me any questions; they started right in beating me.

What should I do? I did know of one place where Jews had hidden property — in Kiveh's house. Since there were no people there any longer, I thought that if I told them about this place, no one would suffer and maybe I would save my life. I led them to the house and after digging around they found some bottles containing dollars and diamonds, also some silver candlesticks, copperware and such things — a considerable treasure. The Germans took the more valuable things for themselves; the rest they loaded onto a cart and took to city hall.

After several weeks the group of 80 Jews were sent to the camp at Skarzysko. I was able to avoid their fate because during this time I had become acquainted with a Polish family named Styeks, where I had previously found refuge almost every evening. There was another Jew there, from Tomashov-Mazowieck, named Mietyk, together with a woman friend, Vladka. With me was another Polish girl.

When it became too risky to stay in Szydlowiec, the four of us went to Warsaw. (Mietyk too had Aryan document.) In Warsaw we rented a room, but we had no money to live on. I had to support the others, so a few times a week I traveled through the villages around Waraw, smuggling corn and flour by train and selling it.

One day a Polish policeman stopped me at the railroad station and asked me where I was going. I told him I was "going away."

"I know you're a Jew," he said, "and I know what you're doing. I'm not going to arrest you, but you and your friends had better disappear from here in the next 24 hours."

Naturally, we got out of Warsaw. We went to Briwinow, where one of the Polish girls had a sister. Things were very bad for me there at first. To support myself I became a hod-carrier and lugged cement up and down scaffolds. Later I met several young Poles who were stealing coal from the trains and I joined up with them. For a year I was night watchman at the railroad station. Here I had an easier time, but then the station manager offered to give me a regular daytime job, which would have been fine, but one of the conditions of employment was a medical examination. the doctor would have seen soon enough that I was a Jew.

By a ruse, I went to a Polish doctor for my examination, not a German one, and in return for a large sum of money he gave me the proper certificate. I worked at the station until the arrival of the Russians in January 1945. A few days after that I went to nearby Milanawek, where I met Nissen Stark and together we went to Lodz.

WITH AN “ARYAN PASS”

by Abba Rosenbaum

When the Germans entered Szydlowiec, many of the Jews there started running toward the Russian borders, but the Germans advanced so rapidly that the Jews had no choice but to return to Szydlowiec.

The Nazis immediately began their well known brutalities. Realizing that life in the shtetl as a Jew would become more and more precarious, I provided myself with a Polish pass. I could do this because of my looks and my close friendship with a circle of local Poles. My Polish name was Zygmunt. I lived as an “Aryan” until the first deportation. When the trains began arriving at the station, my father said to me: “With your looks

you have a good chance of surviving. The sooner you leave the better.”

I heeded his advice. The night before the deportation I went to Skarzysko, taking with me my sister Tsippe’s two children — Malkele and Leyele. In Skarzysko (not in the camp) I had another sister — Dora Greenberg. I sent the children to their mother, who was in the Hasag camp, but she sent them right back to me, saying that it was too dangerous for children there.

I stayed in Skarwysko two nights. (I met David Rosenbloom and Leybush Zucker there.) Then I took the two children and went to Blyzin, where we lived with a Polish woman. I stayed there for two weeks, moving around freely and even attending church services. From there I took the children to Warsaw. Using the trains openly, i traveled frequently to Radom and Starchowicz. On one such trip I took Yitzhok Goldberg’s little girl (Leah) from Starchowicz to her uncle in Radom. I lived on the Aryan side, but I also had contact with Jews in the ghetto wearing the yellow patch, to buy food and other necessities.

One day I went to Skarzysko to try and get my sister Tsippe out of there. I arrived there just as the jews were going out to work. My sister noticed me, quickly dressed herself up as a Polish woman and started walking toward me. To my horror, a guard noticed this and arrested her. The next day they shot her.

Another trip from Warsaw to Skarzysko also ended very badly. I was arrested for not having a work-card and they took me to the Gestapo in Radom, where they started torturing me as only the Gestapo knows how. They charged me with various crimes. To check if I was a Jew they brought in Polish “specialists” who testified that no Jew would ever be able to say the Christian prayers as well as I did.

From Radom they sent me to Auschwitz as a political

offender, along with 950 other Polish "politicals." In Auschwitz they interrogated me again to the accompaniment of beatings, but I stuck to my story that I was neither a Jew nor a Communist.

I think the following will be of interest. My pass was made out in the name of a Pole. It happened that a man with the same name was also arrested as a political offender and brought to Auschwitz a few weeks before I was. Apparently he broke down under torture and they sent him to Buchenwald, where he died. The Gentile was killed and his "representative," the Jew, survived...

I was at Auschwitz for about two years — 1943 and 1944. Transports came here from everywhere. Among them I once saw my friends Joseph Mendelsohn, Shammai Gritzman, Bucza Marianke and Yitzhok Goldberg from Szydlowiec. I threw them some bread over the barbed wire fence.

In Auschwitz I accidentally met an S.S.-man who turned out to be a British spy. He succeeded in getting a group of four Jews out of the camp. I was supposed to be in the next four that he was planning to get out, but by that time the Gestapo was on his trail and he was arrested.

Around September 1944 I was one of a group of political prisoners sent to Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart, to repair the bombarded railway lines. I worked there until April 1945. Two weeks before liberation I jumped off a train and escaped to Stuttgart. For ten days I lay in a bunker with eight other men before I was arrested and brought back to the camp. I was sentenced to be shot on April 19, the following day. When the Ubersturmfuehrer of our construction gang asked us if we had any last requests, we told him:

If you kill us, you won't get anything out of it. But if you let us live, you'll stay alive yourself."

He was persuaded by our argument and the next day we were freed by the French army. We kept our part of the

bargain: we intervened with the authorities and they didn't bother him.

WITH FORGED PAPERS

by Nathan Stark

It is not accidental that Hitler chose Poland as the place to liquidate the Jews of Europe. The Polish population, poisoned by anti-Semitism for generations, reacted with indifference to the eradication of its Jewish fellow-citizens. In many cases, Poles actively assisted the murderers. Nevertheless, one cannot generalize about this, because there were exceptions — Polish Christians who helped Jews, risking their own freedom and often their own lives.

It is thanks to Poles like these that I am alive, and it is only fair that such people — most of them Szydlowiecers — should be recorded in our Yizkor Book. Their names are: Zygmunt Janicki (son of a letter-carrier) ; Zygmunt Jakobowski; Zygmunt Golaszewski (son of an apothecary) ; Stanislaw Lubuc, the School Director's son; Szmuniowski and Thaddeus Stolarczik.

After the deportation in 1942 I remained with a group of 70 Jews who were called the "Clean-up Commando." We collected Jewish possessions from the abandoned homes and we also worked in the Jewish cemetery, burying the victims of the deportation.

One day the gendarmes Karpinski and Bauer brought a young man to the cemetery and shot him. They had found forged Christian documents on him — the same kind of papers that I had. I was waiting for the "clean-up" work to be finished in Szydlowiec and then I planned to escape to the Aryan side. Yitzhak Silberstein, who knew about my plan,

tried to dissuade me from it by telling me about the young man who had been shot. He wanted us to stay together. But I had made up my mind that I was not going to a concentration camp.

Our whole group was quartered in Fishl Eisenberg's tannery, where everyone had his own corner. I left my rucksack with a Christian named Polmosko, so that I wouldn't have any bundles to carry when they were transporting us to another place.

On November 11, 1942 the order came to move us to Skarzysko, to work in the munitions plant. We all gathered on Cielce Street, but I continued walking toward the slaughterhouse. Keeping to the back streets, I reached the home of the Janickis. Zygmunt Janicki, who is now a professor at Lodz University, was the leader of a group of young Christians in Szydlowiec who helped Jews. It was he who copied the swastika seal on my forged identity card.

While I was in their house, the Gestapo came to arrest him. His mother refused to let them in. She told them her son was in the post office at his job. They went there and arrested him and held him in various camps until the end of the war. While his mother was stalling the Gestapo, I slipped out of the house and hid in the home of the Polmoskos. Two days later one of the family took me to the railroad station and bought a ticket for me to Warsaw.

Waiting for that train to arrive was an eternity. When it finally pulled into the station I ran in — and almost died of fright. The first person I saw was an infamous sadist in the Szydlowiec labor office who knew me. I braced myself for the arrest, sat down directly opposite him and put my hand in my coat pocket as if I were holding a revolver. In this manner I rode to the next station and walked out of the train unhindered. I took the next train going to Warsaw and went to

the address that Stolarczik had given me. A new life began for me on the "Aryan side."

It soon became evident that having an identity card was not enough. You also needed to speak perfect Polish, without an accent. You had to know Christian religious customs. I was helped in this by people whose addresses had been given to me. They also put me in touch with the resistance movement, where I worked the entire period of the German occupation. For this activity I was later given a Partisan award.

In Warsaw I worked in a warehouse of the Obucz Company located in the "small ghetto" at Number 11 Zeglana Street. The building I worked in was just outside the ghetto. I was also employed as a fireman on the night shift. Since my place of employment was close to the ghetto I had opportunities to help the Jews inside. I noticed that Jews were wearing slippers over their shoes to muffle the sound of their footsteps when they slipped out through the garage near the ghetto gate. This gate was guarded by a Polish policeman. One night I got him so drunk that he fell fast asleep. I opened the gate and let several Jews out. I did this several times and the Jews began to recognize me at a distance in my fireman's uniform.

One day I did not go to work at my job in the warehouse — and that saved my life. I had changed places with a co-worker who was the son of police commissioner before the war. That same night the Gestapo came to question the occupants of the house. My co-worker, knowing nothing about me, came right out to greet the Germans, but they kept calling him "damn Jew" and gave him a brutal beating. He kept screaming "Jesus" but the Gestapo shot him and threw his body into the ghetto.

But even disguised as Christian I faced death more than once. On a day in April 1943 a German named Schmidt came into the warehouse on business. When he saw me he said to me in a low voice, "You're a good Jew." I denied it, but he only

laughed and left. After he left I thought about it for a long time — should I stay here or should I run away again.

My common sense told me to stay, because if Schmidt was a Gestapo-man he would have arrested me as soon as he saw me.

A few days later I learned that he himself had fled from Warsaw because the Gestapo discovered that he had been hiding twelve Jews in his garden.

When the Polish uprising began in Warsaw in August 1944 I fought in the Walle section. After the suppression of the uprising, the Germans shipped many Poles to Germany, among them my wife and me. While our transport was in the station at Praszkw we escaped and got to Milanowek, where we stayed at the home of my wife's parents until the liberation in January 1945.

THE SKARZYSKO CONCENTRATION CAMP

by Mordecai Strigler

(Editor's Note: Many Jews from Shidlovtsse went through the Skarzysko concentration camp and for that reason some of them survived, despite the worst cruelties of the Nazi authorities in that camp. We therefore believe it is necessary to present a broader description of this camp and we thank the noted writer Mordecai Strigler for permitting us to use parts of his book, In Fabrik fon Toyt (In the Death Factory).

I. Introduction

Among the various concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Poland and Germany, this writer lived for 15 months in the "Hasag" factory at Skarzysko-Kamienne near Radom. Here he wrote a lot in scret and collected any and all materials that

could later be used for writing a precise history of this vale of tears. Unfortunately, all these materials were lost.

This book is therefore written from memory and is only a fragment of what actually happened. Here I have to be satisfied, for the time being, with a bare, dry overview of Hasag and Skarzysko.

When the German armies invaded Poland in 1939 they found among the large textile and heavy industry plants also several arms factories in the western part of the country. The Polish government which, by the way, generally produced only small quantities of weapons, abandoned these factories and left them unprotected. The Germans therefore could immediately continue the production of a variety of instruments of destruction. They were also able — thanks to their organizational apparatus and their brutal speedup of the workers — to expand the factories into major war production centers.

Ready and able to help them were a number of Polish foremen who had managed the factories in the “Polish days” and who, when the Germans marched in, turned out to be long-faithful German spies or “Volksdeutschen” (ethnic Germans). They knew every corner of the factory, all its technical capabilities (which had never been fully utilized) and they knew which workers they could depend on.

For that reason, factories in places such as Czenstochowa, Skarzysko, Radom, Kielce, Blyzyn, Starachowice, Piantici, Ostrowiec and other arms producers crowded into the “Central Industrial Region”, made a significant contribution to the Nazi war machine in its attack upon the east.

As far as I know, these factories, from the very first moment, were taken over mainly by private enterprises in the German war industry — under Kommissariat direction — among them the Herman Goering Works and the Aktion Gesellschaft of Hugo Schneider (Iron and Metal Works Hugo Schneider, Hasag A. G.) with its main office in Leipzig. The

General Director of all the Hasag factories was Paul Budin. All the orders and decrees were signed by him.

The present overview is limited to the Hasag section of the Skarzysko camp. (The grenade production there was known by the code letter K.A.M.). Again, it should be noted that what I write here and in my other books is only a pale reflection of what actually took place in the Hasag factories.

II

The factory in Skarzysko was divided into three departments, several kilometers apart, that were designated as Works A, Works B, Works C. From the end of 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland, until mid-1941, only Polish slave laborers worked in this factory, except for the "volunteers" who were afraid of being sent to Germany as slaves laborers. Every day a certain number of Jews from the Skarzysko ghetto were brought in; they were used only for cleaning up the factory grounds, building barracks in the nearby woods and similar jobs. (In the factory buildings themselves and at weapons production, Jews were not acceptable. Brought in to work early in the morning and taken back to the ghetto in the evening, they knew very little about the factory relationships.)

It was not until November 1941 that the S.S. permitted the Hasag managers to round up Jews in various Polish cities and towns to work in their factory. This permission was granted as part of a general understanding that the S.S. reached with semi-civilian enterprises of all sorts. According to the rules of the General Governor of Poland — Reichs-Minister Dr. Hans Frank, all Jews were to be "recruited" for forced labor for the German state.

Thus the Jews in the entire area of the "General Gouvernment" (the former Polish district of Warsaw, Kielce, Lublin, Radom, Krakow and later also Lwow), automatically became the slave property of the S.S. and the Gestapo. Only

those firms, factories and enterprises whose number of Jewish workers was allotted by the German Labor Office could use Jews as slave-laborers. They were required also to pay the daily wages of the Jewish workers to the S.S.

The Gestapo and the S.S. therefore saw the Jewish workers as a source of income, and the firms that "paid" for the privilege of using them tried to squeeze the last drop of labor out of the work day, knowing that the Jews were no more than beasts of burden which no one was concerned about and whose lives no one would protect. They knew that for every one of them that fell, there would be a replacement. The Jew was utilized in this manner by everyone.

Whenever a Jew grew so weak that he could not produce his daily "quota" or became too ill to report for work, the factory management considered him not worth the wages they had to pay to the S.S. His absence was therefore reported to the proper places. The S.S., for its part, seeing in such a person an object that could no longer yield its daily output, would immediately take him out and shoot him. Every few days a selection took place in the factory. The Jews selected would be taken out to the "firing range" where new products were tested, and there they would be shot and buried. Many Jews were also killed and their bodies hidden deep in the woods area that was part of the factory grounds. It depended on the circumstances of the execution.

Jews therefore exerted their last ounce of strength in order to be "useful and productive." this system — which I know from personal experience in scores of camps — was most clearly applied in Hasag. But let us proceed chronologically.

Early in 1942 a major *aktie* was begun to send Polish workers to Germany, where production was in full swing. New factories were opening that needed more and more hands. The Hasag directors too were opening new departments, to which German workers from the main plant in Leipzig were being sent as foremen. There was therefore a great demand for labor

not only in Leipzig but in the Hasag departments, which they tried to fill with slave laborers from the occupied regions in the east.

Jews, though subject to the law of forced labor, were not sent to Germany, however. The plan to annihilate the Jews of Europe was already worked out to the last detail, and the Nazis did not want to scatter them far and wide; they preferred to concentrate them in Poland, the future mass grave of European Jewry. They therefore selected from the Polish and Ukrainian factories a group of qualified and unqualified workers and sent them to Germany to take the place of the German workers in the military or of those who had been sent out as foremen. The result of this was that many foremen and managers in the Polish factories began to play a leading role in the German war economy.

Hasag therefore started a major propaganda campaign — in addition to its forced labor methods — to recruit new workers for their factories. In the special Hasag magazine that later fell into my hands I found glorious descriptions and illustrations of the paradisiacal life led by the eastern workers in the lush regions in which the Hasag factories were located. Most of the ammunition plants were in the forest, an effective camouflage against enemy air raids.

Then came the plan to complement the Polish workers with Jews, so that more Poles would be available to work in Germany, especially when large-scale production began of picric acid and T.N.T. (These poisons ate up the heart and lungs, so that Polish workers began avoiding these jobs.) Afraid of punishment by the Gestapo for this “crime,” many Poles fled to the forest and formed partisan groups. The managers of the factories soon realized that the Poles would work better in Germany, but that Jews could be used for the most onerous and dangerous jobs. It was enough to get the permission of the Radom Gestapo, whose chief (Schippers) considered the Jews

of his district to be his personal property, and the apparatus of rounding up Jews for slave labor was put into motion.

III

The mass deportation of Jews "to the east" began. Soon every Jew knew that Jews were being sent to the gas chambers. In desperation, Jews in the ghetto began searching for a way out of the trap. A temporary salvation seemed to be the labor camps that were producing for the war. It was assumed that people working in the important jobs like that would be spared.

When the "Jewish resettlement" began in the Radom-Kielce region, the Hasag camp leader, S.S. Sturmfuhrer Infling rode through Jewish towns in the role of a redeeming angel and began recruiting "volunteers." To a few chosen individuals he confided that the Jews were doomed in any case; the younger people would be sent to the dread concentration camps, but it was certain that if they were working in the factories, nobody could touch them. In Apt, for example, he explained:

"Whoever wants to save himself can register for work in the Hasag factories; there his life will not be in danger..."
(Story by Yidl Ornstein, from Apt, and others)

Why this need to campaign for "volunteers" at a time when the Jews were completely without rights, when all Jews without exception were already condemned to death? A look at the further activities of the businesslike S.S. will make that question unnecessary.

The aforementioned Infling told the Jews in Tzoysmer (Kazimierz), when he was registering volunteers for his factory: Certain death waits for Jewish youth and for Jews in general. At best, all they have to look forward to is a slow martyr-death in a concentration camp instead of a quick death in the gas chambers. Even if they are shipped to a camp they cannot take any of their possessions with them. Whatever belonging they

manage to take along, if they don't lose it in the way, will be confiscated, because even when they let anyone live in the camps, they first make him strip to the skin... Those Jews, however, who registered with him as volunteers would be permitted to take along some underwear and their best clothes, even food. And (in secret) even money and valuables. Everything in the ghetto would be liquidated. Only the things they took with them would be safe... They would be permitted to live like human beings. They would even receive a daily wage for their work. His workers would not have to change their civilian clothes for prison garb. As far as he was concerned, his workers could even wear their hair long. And if there were any young women who wanted to volunteer, they could do so, and they could live there with their husbands. "It's the only way left for you," he concluded, "where you can live like human beings." (Moniek Kuperblum, Yekhiel Zinamon, and others)

At first, this kind of talk did not have much effect. After a small number of Jews were deported from every city, the storm abated for a while. In the ghetto, Jews began coming out of their holes and again tried to earn a living. And since Jews did not put much trust in every word the Germans uttered, especially when life in the worst ghetto was still more bearable than in the best concentration camp, people preferred not to anticipate what might be in store for them. So there were not enough volunteers and Infling had to come down with his *Werkeschutz* (factory police) and round up the required number by force. Here too they used the customary S.S. method of enlisting the Judenrat. The Jewish Police in each ghetto were ordered to provide a given contingent of Jewish men for the Hasag factories.

I know, for example, that from Kazimierz the Judenrat first delivered various underworld characters and adventurers who were considered harmful to the Jewish community. But

they also included individuals with whom members of the Judenrat had personal scores to settle. The rest were recruited from the impoverished masses of Jews who did not have the money to ransom themselves from the Judenrat officials. Such people had nothing to lose, knowing that in case of any German raid they would be the first to go. So they volunteered or they didn't put up a struggle when the police came for them. This process took place in many towns in that particular region.

Gradually news started coming in from the Lublin region where the rounding up of Jews had begun earlier and in an extremely brutal manner, which put an end to the slightest optimistic doubt about what was soon going to happen to the Jews. This realization congealed our blood. People began sensing the closeness of the death-warrant that would include everyone... More and more volunteers registered for work as a reprieve from certain death.

The center for recruiting volunteers was the German labor office in Ostrowiec, near Kielce. Special busses were assigned to pick up the volunteers, who were permitted to take all their belongings with them to the Hasag. Panic overwhelmed everyone. It seemed that in a few days nothing would be left of all the Jewish towns in the area. Mothers and fathers who could not tear themselves away from their own four walls, or who, because of their age, were no longer "acceptable" for work, watched tearfully as the busses with their armed guards drove away. They no longer had the strength even to cry aloud; only their eyes glistened with the question: "Will we ever see each other again?"

In other homes, people had long discussions and came to the conclusion that they must divide up their roles, that the younger ones should go to the Hasag now, and others, for the time being, should stay at home. If the Hasag turned out to be a bad place, then someone should be left behind in the ghetto to send a package of food or a bundle of underclothing to the

camp. And should anyone succeed in escaping from the Hasag, then let him have somewhere to go... And if things got too hot in the ghetto, let there be someone in Hasag who would already know the conditions there, who would know what doors to knock on in order to get friends and survivors moved or out of the death transports.

In this manner, Jews in all the imprisoned towns passed these days of fear and bewilderment, making sober calculations of how to save at least one person in the family...

IV

Around May 1942, thousands of Jews — “volunteers” and those taken by force — began pouring into the Hasag camp from Bodzentin, Rakow, Stopnice, Apt, Poksiwnice, Staczew and similar places. Upon arrival, everyone was subjected to a thorough inspection by the German, Ukrainian and Polish Werkschutz. These guards removed from the packages whatever they wanted, but they also left a lot of things, in order to lure other Jews into coming. They knew that the ghetto people had some sort of contact with their families in the camp — let them bring as much as they could carry. In the end it would all remain in Hasag anyway.

The S.S. and the Werkschutz of the camp had a variety of plans for utilizing the Jews. First came the announcement that families “back home” could send packages of food and underclothing to the camp. All you had to do was write a note to your relatives telling them what to send and give the note to the Werkschutz, who would then deliver the notes in person. The Jews in the camp understood full well the purpose of such “favores.” At the same time, they also had a strong suspicion of what would soon happen to their belongings back home. So whatever could be kept out of the hands of the Germans was “profit.” No one could — or wanted to — look into the immediate future and see that this act itself would result in

worse trouble for anyone who took advantage of such an opportunity.

Every few days large trucks arrived in the ghetto with werkschutz guards who picked up everything possible and brought it to the camp. In order to gain the trust of the camp inmates they took with them several Jews from the camp to persuade the people in the ghetto to send more and more things. As a result, the Werkschutz ended up with expensive gifts, given to encourage them "to treat the Jews there better."

Then the Werkschutz looked through all the packages and took everything of value. The Jews in the camp, nevertheless, had an interest in seeing that these trips to their home towns were made more and more frequently. Even the Jews from towns that had been completely wiped out still wanted to save whatever they could of their meager property. The best way to do this was to go to the ruined house with a member of the Werkschutz and bribe him to let you look for money or gold that the family may have hidden.

At that time there were already indiscriminate shootings, but in general the Germans still treated Jews with less than murderous intent. It seemed that if a person had some money or useful articles, for which they could buy food from the Poles and the Werkschutz, one might hold out until times changed for the better. Meanwhile the Werkschutz knew who the inmates were that owned anything valuable and they kept an eye on them "for future reference."

V

The General Director of all three Skarzysko factories was S.S. Standarten-Fuehrer Dalski, who had been a colonel in the Polish army. In peacetime he had been the director of the same state ammunition factory and he bears the main responsibility for everything that happened there. (Together with Budin he was supposed to have been captured by the Americans in May

1945 in Thueiringen.) The chief of the Werkschutz was Hauptsturemfuehrer Krause. (Early in 1944 he was replaced by Sturm-fuehrer Polmer.) Then there was Oberwachfuehrer Batenschleger (up to the last minute he was the Czenstochowa Hasag) and S.S. Lt. Eisenschmitz. Assisting them was Foreman Heinrich, a civilian, as head of the Juden-Einsatz. All of these men together with others to be mentioned later in this narrative committed the worst crimes in Werke A and partly in Werke C.

To help them in their "duties" they organized a Jewish police force with its own Kommandant and camp chief. The first Kommandant of Werke A was a Jew from Lemberg named Saltzman, who was later shot by the S.S. Kommandant, and the Kommandant of the camp of the police was a Jew from radom named Tepperman. He was executed in August 1944 along with the second Kommandant of Werke A, Klepitski by the underground Jewish organization in Buchenwald.

The Jewish police force in Werke A grew from 30 to 70. Its functions: to act as additional camp guards for night duty, to distribute meals and to get the workers to their jobs on time and in the required number; often, they also assigned the workplaces. After the S.S. and the Werkschutz, they were the most powerful people in the camp. There were also Jews working in the main camp office; Kommanders of provisions, clothing and similar functions. Their subordinates were the Jewish foremen and lower rank camp functionaries. The S.S. made use of them for their own dark purposes. It should be noted here that the Jewish police and Kommanders were recruited mostly from groups that had come to the camp first. Having been in the camp longer, they were not only familiar with its physical layout, but they also knew whom to butter up in order to further their own "careers."

As I have already noted, the first Jews to be sent out of the ghettos, in their great majority, were underworld characters from the smaller and larger cities. They were therefore the first

to volunteer for the police, because they did not mind carrying out of orders for the S.S. They were "the right men for the job." Also, there were a number of assimilated Jewish intellectuals who had always looked upon the Jewish masses as inferior and therefore could, with an easy "conscience," inflict various tortures upon their fellow Jews and even send them to their death. This was a general characteristic of all the police in the various ghettos and camps. There were a few exceptions, however, from both the psychological and moral standpoint, about whom I will write later.

The people who came with the later transports were given a hard time by their own townspeople who had been deported earlier and had, over the course of time, worked their way "up through the ranks." There were also instances when the Jewish police acted out of frustration, anger or revenge.

To see what the human element looked like in Hasag it will suffice to give a few examples.

Apt. near Kielce, was ordered to send a contingent of 700 people to the Hasag camp. The Judenrat could not provide the required number. The police rounded up anyone they found on the street, but in their zeal they also picked up a good number of children aged 10 to 12. (Some of these children later, by accident, went through a number of camps and survived). Of that 700, only about 70 were alive in August 1944. And this was a larger proportion than usual only because the Jews from Apt had managed to smuggle in money and had more experience in methods of survival. From other transports with thousands of people, only isolated individuals were left after a short time.

The Apt group, for example, was assigned to Werke A; some of them went to the foundry, where they made heavy grenades, and some to transporting the production. No exceptions were made for the young people. A large part of the Jews were crowded into the half-finished Technical School near Skarzysko. Not all of them could find a place in the bunks that had been knocked together like narrow cages, so a few hundred

slept on the ground. There was no roof. The slightest rainfall resulted in a flooded barracks where everyone tiptoed around in the mud. The unlucky ones had to sleep in the dirt.

Naturally, a brisk trade went on for these places, and the policeman who was in charge of this could sell them for whatever he wished. The inmates soon became lice-infested, their clothing fell apart. There was no water to wash a shirt. And after a hard day's work of 14-17 hours, there was no time or patience for it. People dropped like flies or grew so weak that they gave up... (Baruch Goldberg, Warsaw, and Hannah Balter, Apt)

On October 3, 1942 the remaining Jews in the ghetto of Skarzysko were "expelled" — they were herded into one place, the healthy or "protected" men and women were put into another place. That same day Batenschleger and Eisenschmitz carried out the first mass selection in Werke A. Of the 4,000 Jews there at the time, they selected about a thousand, most of them worn out by the hard labor. Looking like starved derelicts, they were taken to the forest near Werke C. Along the way, several hundred were machine-gunned by the Werkschutz; the rest were taken to the assembly point in the ghetto. Later that day they were sent, along with the Jews from Skarzysko, to Treblinka. To take their place came the younger and healthier men and women who had been selected. (Yoel Goldberg, born 1926 in Skarzysko)

I have been unable to ascertain if it is absolutely correct that this exchange plan was carried out for large sums of money given to the S.S. by interested parties...

This was the beginning of a series of horrors, one after the other.

VI

From that day on, the camp "life" took a turn for the worse. There were strict inspections during which they

confiscated anything of value from everyone. On more than one occasion they stopped the work, drove the Jews into one large room and inspected everyone individually. No one any longer left anything in the barracks, because in the crowded conditions your personal "belongings" disappeared from under your very eyes. So it was easy for the "inspectors" to take whatever they liked. This particular activity was directed by Heinrich.

Before the inspection he announced that everyone must immediately give up his money, gold and valuables. Anyone later caught with those things would be shot on the spot. After the first shootings by Batenschleger many people turned in their money. "If we survive, there will be other money," people consoled themselves. Others understood, however, that existence in the Hasag with empty hands means certain death, in a more horrible manner. So they didn't surrender their money... They hid it in the most unlikely places and later were able to buy a piece of bread from the Polish foremen at a high price, but they stayed alive a little longer.

There were also those who, out of envy, spied on fellow inmates who had a piece of bread to eat every day and reported them to the Werkschutz. The "culprit" would be taken to the German guardhouse and beaten until he gave up not only his money but his soul too. Often he was forced to reveal the names of friends who also owned something. In every camp there were such Jewish informants who betrayed hundreds of their brothers. (Some of the Skarzysko informers were later executed by the underground in Buchenwald.)

Among the Werkschutz were some who (with their own hands) murdered masses of Jews. Thus the Ukrainian Ivanko and his friend Kozlowski, during their service in Hasag, killed about a thousand Jews. The pretexts were various, but mostly it was just plain murder. Then there were monsters like Schneider (a German), Chapek (an Ukrainian), the brothers Sawchuk (Poles) and scores of other scoundrels whose names I

could not verify. The first two mentioned above “officially” shot only those Jews who “looked bad” and were therefore considered unable to work. And in order to “look bad” it was enough to be wearing tattered clothing. But they also murdered many brave, good-looking and well dressed young men because “if they looked so good, they must have money.” A pair of good boots or a good coat became the Angel of Death. You were thus caught between two fires: you were afraid to look ugly and emaciated, but it was worse to look good too. And there were many victims among those who could not strike the right balance.

Meanwhile it became common knowledge that four “Jewish cities” were being established in the Radom district. All those Jews (the official announcement said) who were hiding in various towns and cities, in villages or forests, could openly report to these special Jewish cities where “the last remnants will be concentrated and will survive.” This sly Gestapo trick was used by the Germans in all areas of occupied Poland to lure many Jews out of hiding and concentrate them all in one place, so that later it would be easier to round them up.

Four such cities were designated: Radomsk, Szydlowiec, Ojezd and Kazimierz. These “Jewish cities” were supposed to be protected from future roundups. Since the Jews who were in hiding had no reason to trust the Gestapo, the meticulous Nazi murderers decided to leave these towns alone, for the time being. But first they set up *Judenratn* in these cities, with Jewish police and all the appurtenances of a ghetto, like in the “good old days” before the first transports.

The Gestapo and the German police averted their eyes from the newly established cities. Control of the ghetto gates was slackened. Peasants from the countryside could easily slip through with their little store of food. Business boomed. People again began to earn some money and to live a “normal” life.

Those who had remained alive forgot — or forced themselves to forget — the havoc that had been brought only a month earlier and tried to knock together some kind of habitable place to live.

Around that time General Governor Hans Frank delivered a speech in Krakow reporting on various administrative problems in his kingdom. “One no longer sees any Jews in the General Gouvernement,” he said, among other things. “And where such do exist, it is no longer the usurer-type who sucked the blood out of our German workers. Today they are working...”

So the kernel of optimism inside the Jews took over again and began to believe that the conscience of the world must have awakened “out there” somewhere, that the allies must have sent Hitler an ultimatum and that he must have promised them not to sent any more Jews to their death. Such rumors and comments surfaced when the “Jewish cities” were founded and the Gestapo deliberately spread and promoted similar “good news.”

There were Gestapo officers who already had “their own” Jews in whom they confided — under threat of a bullet in the head if they dared to tell anyone about it — things “they had heard themselves” in the highest circles... These officers, of course, laughed up their sleeves as they were revealing these “secrets,” knowing that a half hour later even the children in the ghetto would be repeating them and that this would atrophy the newly aroused watchfulness to signs of danger.

And even though at first the Jews in hiding put no stock in such freely circulating “secrets,” they still came to believe, little by little, that something had changed, in view of the undoubted fact that for the past week or two the ghetto had been quite calm.

On the concentration camp inmates, the establishment of the “Jewish cities” had an even more magical effect. If they

had borne everything up to now with the resigned awareness that there was nothing else they could do, these new ghettos new attracted and beckoned to them like fantasy worlds. People began hearing that there were still Jews in Radom and other cities who were living "freely." Those who had fallen victim, well, that was past and there was nothing you could do about it. But those who were left — it might go on this way until the war ended. So why stay here?

Starved and exhausted, living continually in dirt and excrement, always under the whip, such news worked in the camps like strong drink. Rumors spread from mouth to mouth, embroidered by the wings of imagination, by the belief that "God had taken pity on the surviving remnant of His people" and that "inside the gates of Szydlowiec He has giving them bread in abundance..." So why stay here among the condemned?

A mass "escape" from the camp began, although a great many Jews were caught by the Germans on the way, or turned in by Poles who caught them on the roads and dragged them to the Germans, who promptly executed them. Life in the camp had become so unbearable, however, that many began searching for a way to get through the barbed wire — with one percent of hope that they would reach nearby Szydlowiec or Kazimierz and there "legalize" their status.

In accordance with regulations in all the concentration camps, Batenschleger held ten Jews hostage for every Jew who escaped. After every such incident he lined up the whole camp, selected several of the strongest and healthiest young Jews and without warning shot them on the spot. This didn't work either. It only strengthened the psychosis of escape. Hundreds were shot on the roads and still other hundreds followed them. It was sufficient to hear that so-and-so had not returned to the barracks the night before, and thousands of hearts beat faster the next night with restless longing.

It reached the point where the Judenrat members became alarmed. Even if an escapee succeeded in reaching the ghetto of a Jewish city, they were afraid to register him officially. There were even cases where the Jewish police returned such individuals to the German authorities, out of fear that "they might, God forbid, bring down a calamity upon everyone else."

The Werkschutz — Ivanko, Koslowski and Schneider — meanwhile sought out among the Jews individuals who were still a bit better dressed, who were suspected of still having some money hidden away. They would take such people over to the barbed wire, shoot them "while trying to escape," and steal all their valuables. (To a great extent, they were helped in this barbarity by the following informers: Mendl Weintraub from Zwolin, Yozef Weisbloom and Zenk Milstein from Suchednow and Moshe Stark from Radom. More about them later.)

Certain Werkschutz guards utilized the psychosis of escape in another way. First they "cultivated" the newly arrived Jews in the camp. The new transports were assigned mainly to the most strenuous work, where they didn't last very long. They were therefore the first to think about escaping. So there soon appeared "dealers" among the Poles (also a few Jews) who found "friendly" Werkschutz members who, in exchange for several thousand zloty, were ready to be helpful in getting Jews through the barbed wire. The escapee merely had to alert himself to what part of the fence his particular guard was watching. Such cases almost ended the same way:

The money was handed to the Werkscutz man. When night fell, the Jew who had paid the money made his way cautiously to the fence and checked whether the guard was satisfied with the payment. They then said goodbye to each other and the guard moved ten paces away from the fence to make sure no one was watching. The escapee, moving excruciatingly slowly, got closer and closer to the fence. At the last moment, however, a bullet in the head dropped him in his tracks.

Later the Werkschutz guard receive a special citation and even a few days leave, plus a reward for catching a Jew "in the act of trying to escape..."

VII

The "Jewish city" in Radomsk was liquidated at the end of 1942, most of the Jews being sent to Treblinka. A small number of healthy young people were selected for the Hasag. Several hundred men were brought to Skarzysko and divided among the three places, most of them former ghetto police and their families. The rest included some of the more well-to-do intelligentsia who had managed to survive until the last moment in the ghetto and later "escape" to Hasag. A few of them were "promoted" to the police and other camp functions. One of them, Czepicki, thanks to his own brutal character and his "good relations" with the S.S. leaders, was even appointed Kommandant of Werke A.

The "boss" of Werke A was the German guard Kineman (also known as "The Hunchback"). This sadistic autocrat, finding support among the Jewish underworld characters in the camp, granted them unlimited power over their tormented brothers.

The following incident is worth noting. Two Jews from Radomsk, attempting to escape, were caught by the Ukrainian Werkschutz, named Katula. As he was taking them to the firing-range in Werke C, they jumped him. Katula shot one of them. The other cut Katula's throat with a pocket-knife and escaped.

In retaliation, the Werkschutz picked up three Jews at random in the factory and shot them in front of the factory gate. The same day, the Werkschutz leader lined up all the Jews in Werke A. They expected the worst, but it ended with only a stringent inspection, during which the guards confiscated all the pocket-knives.

This is the only case I know of active resistance with a knife. I also know about a few instances where Jews who had been shot escaped with only a wound, after the Werkschutz had left them for dead.

In January 1943 a typhus epidemic broke out in the camp. The Jewish overseers assigned a special barrack for the sick and let them lie there without medical help or attention until they died. Since there was no one to carry out the dead, they lay there for days among the living. The stench grew worse and worse, until Batenschleger took it upon himself to end the epidemic. With his own hands he shot more than a hundred of the sick. He ordered the Werkschutz to shoot anyone suspected of carrying the disease. As a result, Jews were shot in their way to or from work. A weakness in a person's gait or even general behavior which they interpreted as lethargic was sufficient for the Werkschutz to diagnose as typhus.

Batenschleger also ordered a record kept of all persons who had been sick and recovered. This duty was assigned to the German foremen, who could easily determine which workers had not come to their jobs for a few days. Foreman Dumin fulfilled this duty with the utmost zeal. All these men, regardless of the state of their health at the time, were sent to Werke C, where Batenschleger himself shot more victims than all the Werkschutz guards combined. After this, no matter how sick they were, people continued to report for work until they collapsed on the way.

VIII

Among the Jews in Werke A (whose number varied between 4,000 and 7,000) about half were women. Aside from a few "protected" and middle-aged or elderly women (mothers or mothers-in-law of kommandants, policemen or functionaries) all the women were between the ages of 16 and 35 and most of them had been through more than one "selection," so they were healthy and good-looking. One can only imagine the

sexual abuse they were compelled to endure on the part of the German and Polish foremen and the Jewish kommandants. One can also understand the demoralization that set in. Here I wish to record only one incident among many.

On January 3, 1943 the "big shots" of the camp had a party where the liquor flowed freely. Around noon Batenschleger and Eisenschmütz appeared in the camp. The women on the night shift were all asleep. The two drunks broke into the women's barracks, woke everyone up and ordered them to line up, half-undressed, for "inspection." Finally they chose three of the prettiest. One was Milchman, from Suchedniów, another was Silberberg, from Apt. The name of the third woman is not known to me.

Without permitting them to put on any clothes, they dragged the three women across the camp grounds to their own quarters, where they raped them repeatedly. Around four o'clock that afternoon Batenschleger took two of the three naked women into the woods and shot them. He also ordered two men from the camp to bury the women and while they were at it, to dig a third grave... in the evening he brought out the third woman and shot her. (As told to me by my friend Boruch Goldberg. I also heard the story from others.)

This is only one of the scored of cases in Werke A and B. One incident, which I saw with my own eyes, I wish to record here only in general terms:

There were quite a few incidents where Werkschutz guards, foremen and similar functionaries chose Jewish women for themselves, had relations with them for a shorter or longer period, and then shot them or sent them to werke C. Today, as I write this, my heart brakes all over again with the horrible shame of it all.

One of the foremen in werke B, for example, attracted to the prettiest young woman in the factory, assigned her to cleaning his office, and used her for a long time until she

became pregnant. He then waited for a day on which a selection of sick, exhausted and tattered women was taking place, and coldbloodedly added her to the group. She fell to her knees, kissed his shiny boots and begged him to spare her life. She was only 21, she wept, and in the bloom of health. In her desperation she reminded him that only yesterday he has treated her with tenderness — why did he now want to take her life? He smiled cynically. “You’ll be better off there,” he said, slowly pulling out his revolver, and as everyone watched, he put a bullet in the head of “this damned hysterical Jewess.”

The details of many such cases (not all of them ended in death) are known to me.

IX

January 13, 1943 the Germans liquidated the Jewish city of Szydłowiec. No one in the camp knew anything about this except the German administrator. Early that morning there was an announcement that as so many Jews were attempting to escape to the ghetto in Szydłowiec, the camp administration had decided, in order to avoid unnecessary killing, to register anyone who wishes to return to Szydłowiec voluntarily. All these “volunteers” would be sent home, thus enabling those who remained to work more peacefully.

Hardly anyone volunteered. No one trusted these peculiar promises that had been offered so suddenly. The Werkschutz therefore had to go out and round up “volunteers” to return to Szydłowiec... From Werke A, 160 men were sent by train to Szydłowiec and added to the transport going to Treblinka.

The Werkschutz also brought back from Szydłowiec about a thousand young people whom they had selected at the assembly point. This was similar to what happened at the “exchange” in Skarzysko, but no one can verify whether

or not there was an "interested party" involved in the transaction.

At last of the official "Jewish cities" was Sandomierz. (From the fourth city, Ujezd, they sent the Jews elsewhere and I do not know the liquidation date). By a variety of methods the Jews from Sandomierz had maintained themselves until the early months of 1943. When they heard what was happening in the other Jewish cities they realized that the ground under their feet was burning and they started looking for ways to save themselves. People built deep bunkers in the nearby woods, stocked them with food and fitted them with installations (even radios to keep track of what was happening outside) — anything that would enable them to hold out a little longer. We were still receiving shaky news about such individuals in 1944, but most of them were discovered by Poles looking for an easy reward and were delivered into German hands.

Others registered themselves in a camp with the local firm of "Rolnik" because its German director had assured them that nothing would happen to "his" Jews so long as he was alive. Many people in the Judenrat and the ghetto police, as well as individuals who still had large sums of money, now put their lives in his hands. They simply could not bear to leave their familiar surroundings and their beloved Vistula River; at least this way they would stay close to their old home town, even though it lay in ruins. From here they could sometimes visit a local farmer who was hiding some of their money and perhaps buy something to eat.

We often received news about these Jews. Selections took place there too, but some of these people managed to hang on until mid-1944. What happened to them during the Russian offensive on the Vistula, near Baranow, I do not know.

Not everyone could get to Rolnik, however. There were many Jews who felt that in order to save themselves they had to get away from the place where they had been living all their lives — it was as if they themselves were responsible for their own deportation. (And in this intuitive feeling there was a bit of truth; the Jews whom the German allowed to live for a while longer were sent to other places; thus, we were deported from Zamosc to Maidanek, but later they “loaned” a group of Jews from Maidanek to the camp at Zamosc in order to finish some work that had been interrupted. The Germans preferred not to leave us in our own home towns, where one could more easily find a place to hide while trying to escape.

A group of young men (and a few young women) therefore offered voluntarily to be sent to the Skarzysko Hasag. Some of them had just been married and the separation was too difficult to bear, so they took along a pillow and a few shirts, sewed a couple of gold pieces into their shoes or boots and entrusted their lives to fate.

So the transports from the Jewish cities to Werke A ended with the Jews from Sandomierz. With each transport there was a double selection: once to select those who would be killed immediately, and once to select those who could still be useful to the German war effort. The latter were sent to Werke C, where the last bit of strength would be drained from them until they dropped.

Werke A was the largest of the three plants and it had the largest number of Jews, between four and seven thousand. Next came Werke C and its poisonous jobs, with an average of 1,500 to 3,000 Jews. Werke B, the smallest, had about 500-800 Jews. (These figures were continually changing because of the killings; it depended on whether new transports arrived or not.)

Werke A was the “paradise” of the three. Everyone

dreamed of being sent there. Compared to Werke C the conditions there were "fantastically good," but it was sufficient to break one of the camp regulations and the sinner would be shot, or even worse, sent to Werke C to work with the picric acid and the TNT.

X

The camp around Werke A was adjacent to the road leading to the town. Through the barbed wire we could see the horse-drawn coaches, the autobuses, people walking on the sidewalk. This only intensified the yearning for freedom, but at the same time it was also somewhat reassuring — it at least meant some contact — though only visual, with the world outside. Only the barbed wire separated you from it. Werke C, however, was located deep in the forest. Not far from camp A were various businesses, as well as the Hasag bakery, so once in a while you could arrange with a policeman to buy something for you and smuggle it into the camp.

The factory itself was larger and many "civilians" worked there. When the camp administration started sending young Poles to Germany to work, many Polish young men from high aristocratic families registered to work in the factory. Most of them had some sort of "protection" and were sent to Werke A, where the work was easier and cleaner. They brought with them good food from home and at mealtimes did not eat the factory soup. So there were Jews who helped them at their jobs in exchange for their portion of soup and sometimes even a piece of bread. It helped many Jews survive a little longer. In Werke C this happened very rarely.

In Werke A, since there were better educated people with broader friendships and relationships, it was sometimes possible, through one of them (and for a considerable sum of money) to establish contact with your family in a distant

place or with a Gentile who was holding some money or valuables for you. This elaborate plan was supposed to result in some desirable item that eventually reached you in the camp, but here too there were provocations and thefts. Still, it helped to keep some people alive.

In Werke A the Polish workers were a little more tolerant than those in C, where they beat up Jews for no reason. In Werke A the Polish element was itself mostly "green" in their jobs. Their main concern was to "cover" themselves. They were therefore more restrained. Some of them brought bread to sell or they would take a letter from you to mail to an "Aryan" name. Sometimes they were caught doing this and sent to a concentration camp. Novak, a Pole from Skarzysko, was publicly hanged for bringing bread into the factory to sell to Jews.

Since on one wanted to suffer the horrible death of starvation, people gave away their last personal belongings to obtain a piece of bread. They utilized every possibility — no matter how unlikely to succeed — to acquire something by these "letters of entreaty" that might serve as a promise of better times.

XI

Early in 1941 the German had already begun the construction at Werke C to turn it into a mass production plant. For this purpose they used the Jews of Skarzysko. One of the first Jews there — a man named Zayonitz, from Lodz — supervised the construction until the last minute. In December 1941 the German brought the first transport of Jews supplied by Jewish community officials. These Jews worked in the forest kommando cutting down old trees in the Skarzysko forest to clear space for the new factory buildings and for the "Juden-lager."

The first few hundred Jews slept in large barracks inside the factory. Meals consisted of 20 decagrams of bread daily

and three-quarters of a litter of watery soup. As a result of the unsanitary conditions there was an infestation of lice. The factory administration paid no attention whatever to the most elementary needs of the Jews. Their only concern was the production norm. The "inside work" was in Jewish hands — there were only two gendarmes (from the municipal police department) to guard the Jews. The Werkschutz was not formed until much later. Construction manager at that time was an engineer from Leipzig named Schmitz.

The German labor office in Ostrowiec was in charge of supplying Jewish slave laborers for all the factories in the Central Industrial Region. From here the Jewish contingents were assigned to various ammunition plants. The deputy inspector in the labor office, Zeifman, who already knew what was being planned for the Jews, urged the people in the ghetto to register voluntarily in the camps, even for the hardest labor. (I heard about this unique German method only in those particular areas; elsewhere they never "asked" Jews to do certain kinds of work, nor did they even tell them in advance what work they were going to do).

"If any of you still wants to stay alive," Zeifman would add softly, "it will be only the Jews working in the arms factories... they will be the last Jews." (According to Engineer Jacob Kurtz, Warszew, brought from Stashow, died in Buchenwald after the liberation).

A great sobering up process took place in the ghettos. Up until that time, people hid to escape the roundups for slave labor. The political situation showed, however, that the war would drag on for a long time, and events in all the Jewish towns proved that the ghettos would not last much longer. Instead of relying on the well constructed cellars, therefore, people began to see that there was only one way to save themselves — to get out of the ghetto! More people started "volunteering" than were even required.

The Judenrat became the intermediary between the volunteers and the labor office, and saw in this a source of income. They began "auctioning off" the limited number of jobs for higher and higher prices. Large sums of money began flowing from the ghetto into the pockets of Judenrat officials and the Ostrowiec labor office. It reached a point where Jews themselves kept giving the inspector larger and larger amounts of gold to seek out new "jobs" in which Jews from the ghetto could be settled.

Eventually some well-to-do Jews realized that their "palaces" were built on sand and that their money would be taken from them anyway, so they came to the Judenrat with large sums in hand, but asked that it not be distributed to the needy, because no one would be saved thereby; it would be better, they said, to use the money to persuade the labor office to convince the German factories that it was to their advantage to put Jews to work in their plants. This could at least save the Jews for a little while longer. I know personally that contributions of this sort were made in several ghetto towns.

Everyone, however, tried to get the "best" of a bad situation. There were factories, such as the Herman Goering Works in Starachowiec, where the Jews at first lived in the city in fairly human conditions. This was at a time when Jews in Skarzysko were already dying of starvation and filth. Piontki and Blyzyn were therefore "more attractive" than Skarzysko. It is therefore understandable that at that time the authorities had to search for "volunteers" to go to Skarzysko. The labor office did not always permit roundups because — if only for business reasons — they wanted the supply of slave laborers to go exclusively through their hands.

And up to the last moment, Jews kept looking for a better alternative. "For the same money," they thought, "I

can at least live like a human being." There were many, however, who did not want to leave the ghetto under any circumstances; here they had only recently been leading a "carefree" life as condemned prisoners. "Whatever is going to happen to me — let it happen right here, in my own bed..." Others said: "I don't want to be shot in a forest somewhere with lice-infested rags on my back." And there were plenty of other candidates for the factories.

In order to illustrate the situation at that time, before my arrival in Werke C, I want to record here stories that I heard from the lips of my friend Jacob Kurtz. I recall only a few details of what he told me, but may they serve as a memorial for this extraordinarily interesting Jewish personality.

XII

This is what Kurtz told me.

When "things" started happening in Stashew too, we started looking for ways to save ourselves from the inevitable Jewish fate. First we decided to get to Starachowtiek. Aside from the fact that a large sum of money was already in the hands of the Judenrat for this purpose, we — a group of 20 "prospective customers" — each put in an extra hundred zloty. After this fund was raised, they assured us in Ostrowiec that we would be sent there. The next day, three large trucks drove unto the ghetto, each of them with a big sign: HASAG. None of us knew exactly what that meant. We didn't even catch on that something in the plan had changed.

Not until they loaded us and our bundles onto the truck and started driving in the direction of Apt, did we learn that they were taking us to Skarzysko. We were terrified. Could they be taking us to Werke C? It was too late, however, to do anything about it.

At Skarzysko they brought us to a big factory building and left us there to wait. Toward evening the General Director, Dolski, came in with his cynical little smile. With him were Werkschutz leader Krause and 20 to 30 men of the S.A. Group 102, which was stationed near the factory.

"So, you are finally here!" Dolski exclaimed triumphantly. He removed his browning from its holster and added: "You have three minutes to turn in everything you own: gold, money, dollars, watches. I know you have plenty. When the three minutes are up, we will inspect each one of you individually. I don't have to tell you what will happen to anyone on whom we find the least thing of value. And don't think death is the worst thing that can happen to you here."

With a theatrical gesture he waved the gun around and walked out, his eyes still on his watch. Then Krause said something to the uniformed thugs and they started bellowing at the top of their lungs. We could make out the words "Money! Gold! Dollars! Shoot you like dogs!"

In a few minutes a basket full of gold and currency was collected from the 280 men from Stashew. People threw money into the basket as if they had gone crazy. They hurled the goldpieces away from themselves as though they were poison. The mere presence of the uniformed executioners made this understandable. Others made a lightning calculation: keep the beasts satisfied, let them have a full basket, maybe then they wouldn't search everyone individually — and the piece you had hidden away in your shoe or your underwear would stay there.

But they were badly mistaken. The Germans then conducted an inspection that last for hours. Every bundle was opened. When the inspection was over, they took us into another big room where the regular Werkschutz had their turn with us. For several hours we ran, dropped to the ground, got up, ran again, dropped again. Anyone they saw

wearing a better suit or boots was ordered to take it off. Finally they herded us into another factory room across the way. Through the windows we could see the marching groups of Jews in various directions. Thousands of men and women were arriving. Half-undressed, they were being shoved into large halls. After an hour, some of them were marched out and others marched in. Later we learned that this was only "normal" procedure when they searched the Jews in all three Werke.

Somehow we got through the night. During the night the Werkschutz had come in frequently and selected victims. Brutal beatings were also "normal." In the morning Dolski arrived again with his crew and the game began all over again. Finally he barked an order to his underlings:

"Take two hundred of them out to the veranda!"

Not until the last moment did we know that we were being sent to Werke C.

This account is a description of everyday that took place in September 1942. It reflects the uprooting of the last Jews from various ghettos in that region and of their "initiation" into the Hasag. That was how the Jews entered the maw of the tremendous killing-machine.

XIII

As I have already noted, up until that time the Jews were not taken into the "interior" of the factory. One group of Jews worked at constructing the barracks. A larger group (about 900) worked in the forest kommando. Not until September 1942 were the first forty men selected from the Stashew group to work at very dangerous jobs. These were the youngest and strongest, whom they put to work on trotyl, an explosive used in grenades. When this "experiment" proved "successful" and they found the Jews qualified to do the work, they began placing more and more of them into the "manufacturing"

departments of the factory. Only small numbers of Polish workers were left there as supervisors, foremen and technicians.

For a short period of time the guard Schneider was head of the camp. He was a "good-natured" German who let people talk to him. Whenever he grew angry, however — he had a quick temper — he would not release his victims until they fell dead at his feet. Beating people was a kind of sport to him.

Overseer of the forest gang was Zimmerman (known to the inmates as "the green shirt"). It is estimated that he himself killed more than a thousand Jews. His method: to stand at a distance and watch people work at their jobs. It didn't help if you caught sight of him and speeded up your work with your last bit of whatever strength you still possessed. He was determined to find a few victims every day. He would select his victim and before the eyes of all the workers order him to bow down. Then he would calmly begin beating the man with a tree limb. Only rarely did he shoot his victims; he preferred to watch them writhe in pain.

Frequently he would appear in the camp, pick out a few Jews, take them out to the firing-range and shoot them. Later he would come for another group, whom he tormented with questions as he led them to the firing-range. "Are you afraid of me?" he would ask one of the group. Neither a yes or a no answer would mollify him; either was likely to provoke his wrath — a pretext to torture his victim. Mostly he used the second group to bury the first, but you never knew whether you were digging the grave for someone else or for yourself.

His greatest pleasure was the feeling that people were mortally afraid of him, that he was master of life and death for all these people in the camp. A diabolical smile played over his lips when he saw people shrivel up on his arrival at the factory.

A particularly bloody chapter was written by his Polish subordinates and foremen. His "aid" — Kotlenga — whom he assigned to distribute "meals" to the group — was responsible

for hundreds of killings. The following is according to the testimony of several of my friends:

Twelve o'clock. The lunch whistle. The skeletons crawl out of their graves and from a long, serpentine line. Kotlenga walks around with a big blub in his hand. Nine hundred pair of starved eyes stare at the kettle of hot, watery kasha. Finally Kotlenga takes the ladle in his hand. After spooning out the first three portions he puts down the ladle and picks up the club. A powerful blow on the head fells someone in the line, another person, a third, a fourth. Then Kotlenga goes back to ladling out the soup.

One after another the workers silently shuffle past him, holding out the rusty tin bowl. Finally — STOP! Kotlenga measures the man in front of him from head to toe. "Throw away your bowl!" The man silently obeys the order. Kotlenga: "Take off your hat!" Like an automaton the man takes off his hat. Another order: "Hold it out!" Mechanically the man holds out his hat. Kotlenga pours a portion of hot soup into it. And then the last order: "Now put your hat on!"

Terrified, the man "puts on" his hat. A wild, desperate cry of pain pierces the air. But the next man in line must move up. The eyes of the men in the back of the line search frantically for a way out of this trap. They would rather starve to death. But a green silhouette among the trees warns them with the terror of a thousand Angels of Death not to leave the line. The demonic laughter of the "green shirt" welds them to the ground.

Kotlenga glances at his watch. The half-hour for "lunch" is over, but a large part of the line has not yet received its portion of food. As scores of eyes stare, Kotlenga tips over the kettle with one shove of his hand... The line dissolves. Men throw themselves to the ground, scraping to get a spoonful of the soup, now mixed with dirt. Once it is in the mouth, they can separate the soup from the dirt.

And Kotlenga stands over them, beating them with a tree-limb. Blod mixed with the soup and the dirt.

This is only one of the horror stories I heard about this Kotlenga. I saw some of them myself in various forms — they were a daily occurrence in Werke C. Later he grew a bit more restrained and even “negotiated” with Jews. One day we set at a table in the barracks. He was drunk enough to unburden himself.

“I know the Russians are coming closer. If they ever get here and any of you are still alive, I’m sure you’ll hang me, and maybe I deserve it. I only was to tell you one thing: everything I did, I had to do. I am from Posen — a Polish patriot. For *them*, however, I’m a Folks-Deutsch, especially for ‘the green shirt.’ You can hang me — if you live that long. But remember this: after Zimmerman left, my behavior toward you changed.” (We later learned that he *had* cooperated with the Polish underground, like a number of other Poles who murdered Jews.)

XIV

Werke C swallowed up one transport of Jews after another. They came from the most distant places: Plotsk, Pyotrkow, Klimentov, Radomyzl, Bilic, Lodz etc. The work in Werke C soon devoured them. Wherever the camp administration could find a transport of Jews they dragged it to Werke C. Even the youngest and healthiest soon succumbed. How could they not? People never changed their clothes. Whoever could manage it, washed his shirt with some cold water. Most of the inmates, however, weren’t so lucky, so they soon became incredibly filthy. Sleeping on a handful of moldy straw, or a hard board, not taking their clothes off for months, lice and typhus were a natural result. There was no medical help. Two untrained but well protected young men served as the official “medics,” but their work consisted more of keeping lists of the sick for the

selections. They had no bandages, nothing even to cover minor wounds. Everything was left for Nature to take care of.

Those who didn't succumb immediately, who exerted their last bit of energy to get to work, still could not avoid the sharp eyes of the guard leader Kisling, who collected groups of sick Jews for the weekly shooting spree. A great many tried to save themselves by escaping and trying to get to another camp, to Kielce or Ostrowiec, or at least to Werke A. Almost always these attempts ended in death. I know of very few cases where people saved themselves by going to another camp.

Here I want to illustrate only how Kisling reacted to such attempts to escape, as told to me by friends from Sandomierz.

A spring day in Werke C. The night shift is getting ready to go out to work. Everyone gobbles down his piece of bread and bitter "coffee," trying to finish before the guards come. Suddenly — a loud series of whistles. Something new has happened. Could it have anything to do with the group of Tsoyzmer Jews who escaped the previous night? All the groups are lined up, but everyone senses that they are not going out to work yet. Something else will happen first.

They can see Kisling approaching with Sonder, the interrogator, accompanied by several of the Werkschutz. He says something to the Jewish Kommandant Eisenberg, who then, with a bewildered look, says something to the Jewish police. All the police start yelling at once:

"Everyone from Sandomierz line up separately!"

Now everyone knew what will happen. A wall of young men line up in perfect formation, some distance away from the other Jewish inmates. The Tsoyzmer are the strongest and best looking group in the camp; they had managed to hide a little money and they still maintained some contact with the surviving Jews in the Rolnik factory, from whom they occasionally received money and necessities.

Kisling, standing stiffly on one spot, is counting: "...eight...nine...ten." His finger stops at the tenth man, a

heroic figure, as if chiseled from granite. "Three steps forward!" Kisling commands. The young man steps forward and remains standing like a statue. "Eighteen... nineteen... twenty!" As though a magical force were directing his hand to stop at the finest sons of Tsoyzmeer...

Clack! Clack! Clack! Like cloven marble columns they tumble to the ground, one after another...

"To work!" All the groups on the way to work must march past the ten still-warn bodies — the last, proud remnant of a murdered Jewish youth.

As happens every day, the Jewish policeman at the gate counts the groups marching out to work. One — two — three —. Today, however, the heads are bowed even lower than usual...

XV

The kommandant of Werke C was an unusually complex type of a Jewish woman. Her name was Markowitz. Assisting her was her brother-in-law, Eisenberg, whose wife and child were also in the camp. A third brother-in-law was the manager of the food supply. He too had his wife and two children there, as well as the mother of the three sisters they had been able to save. They all lived together in a separate barracks and were the only family in the camp. The inmates referred to this family barracks as "The White House."

Across from the "white house" was the headquarters of the police and the various sub-kommandants. There was a unit of the internal police, whose duty was to keep order in the camp. The other unit was the factory police, which was divided according to the various locations in the factories. The leader of each police unit wore a cap decorated with special stars. All these people had unlimited power in the camp. They were better dressed than the other inmates and they lived better.

There were other privileged groups who had better jobs where they could "do business" and make extra money. Some

of them had the special protection of a German foreman and could obtain various things through him. Such people lived in separate quarters, kept aloof and avoided contact with the starving and exhausted inmates, unless they were buying the last gold tooth from such a person.

This class, plus the police, added up to no more than two to three hundred people. They lived in a degree of safety. They were protected against selections and they never went hungry. Some of them even lived in wastefully extravagant circumstances, compared to the general camp condition. Some of them even allowed themselves to "fall in love," to find women who also wanted to live better; they bought them for a piece of bread or meat, a dress or an easier job in the factory.

XVI

Since I was not among the first in the Skarzysko Hasag, I cannot say for certain how many Jews were killed there "slowly." Mr. Markowitz, the camp kommandant, told me in the final days before the camp was liquidated, that 50,000 Jews had died there (including those shot while trying to escape). Based on my own research, I believe that figure to be a bit exaggerated. David Anulewicz, the last secretary of the Werke C office, told me that he had counted the list of names (before the last massacre) of those who had died or were shot while trying to escape. His figures showed an official list of 21,000 dead.

While I was in the camp I found only isolated survivors of scores of transports. (I lost the exact number of these groups.) Not until mid-July, when all the Jewish reservoirs had been exhausted, did the factory administration turn to its last possible source: Maidanek. Thus, on June 28th, we were brought from Maidanek to Skarzysko. This was one of the few transports to be taken out of Maidanek alive. On November 3, 1943 the remaining 22,000 Jews in Maidanek were taken out and shot.

IN CAMPS WITH SZYDLOWIECERS

by Isaac Milstein

Early on the morning of Wednesday, November 11, 1942 the trucks came to take us to the labor camp at Skarzysko. We arrived at the Hasag camp toward evening. They led us into a big building where the new "Karabinowka" was supposed to have been. The German guards stayed outside, but the two or three Ukrainians came inside and demanded that we give them all our valuables.

The next morning they took us to the bathhouse, then to the office, where they assigned us to various work-places. Those who had a friend or acquaintance in the camp who could interced with the German foremen got easier jobs. But about ten of us, who had no such "influence," were left to chance.

That blind chance sent us to a small creature with a moustache, a Folksdeutsch who spoke Polish, and he took us to the worst place in the camp — the shell foundry. It was frightening just to look at that inferno.

With me were Moyshe Kupersberg, Saul Zlatowitz, Yosl Broitman, David Steinhorn, Yankl Rosenfeld and a policeman from Pshytyk named David. These were the unlucky ones who fell into the worst job in the camp. Not only was the work extremely hard, but the heat was unbearable. There were four big ovens into which we put chunks of steel. When the metal was white hot, a big Polish worker pulled it out of the oven and then we had to put it into a matrix shaped like a bottle. Out of this they made shells for the German light and heavy artillery.

In peacetime, the Polish workers here received special bonuses and they worked only two hours at a time. And here we were, a few exhausted youngsters, and they made us work all day without a break. The Poles who worked with us beat us even worse than did the Germans. There were also German foremen, headed by Dumin, and special overseers called "brigadiers." All these men were sadists; first they stole

everything from their victims and then they made their lives hell.

In that gehennum we found Szydlowiecers who had been there since mid-summer: Israel Feldman, Moyshe Scharitzberg, Yosl Broitman, Nathan Freytag, Nachman Shadman, Aaron Grosscup. We also had a Jewish foreman named Nathan who fit right in with the gang of murderers — a Jewish sadist.

The first meal we got was a watery cabbage soup — and this was supposed to give us the strength to lift and lug those heavy pieces of molten metal.

Six o'clock in the evening we quit work, drenched in perspiration. I was lucky at that, because they put me into a barrack, not in the large building. The barracks were cleaner and roomier. Veteran camp inmates warned me, however: "When you go to sleep, don't take off your shoes, because if you lose your shoes, you lose your life." They meant this literally. Those who had no shoes were shot at every Sunday selection. We also had to be careful to keep our clothing clean and neat.

The German foreman Haas, who spoke Polish, not German, did not take advantage of the newcomers. He hated injustice, he said; in his eyes everyone was equal. He did, however, hate Poles. We trusted him more than we did the Jewish foreman. If you had something you wanted to keep safe — an article of clothing, a chunk of bread — you could put it in Haas's locker, which he always kept locked.

Whoever had any money left could buy a quarter of a loaf of bread. There were even some Jews who had wurst to sell. If you had no money you were in trouble, because you needed something to add to your regular "diet".

Working with us was our landsman Abraham Schwartzman. I could see him deteriorate day by day. The portions of bread that he got every day he traded for cigarettes. I warned him that he could live without cigarettes but not

without bread, but it was to no avail. Soon he was unable to work, and one Sunday, at the selection, they shot him.

A terrible thing happened to Nachman Shadman. He was working in the shell foundry too, but he had an easier job; he and another man carried the hot forms out of the building with a pair of tongs. On this day the tongs suddenly opened and the hot metal, about 80 kilos in weight, fell on Nachman, burning him badly. Dumin, the boss, ran over and shot him on the spot, saying that he did it out of mercy, to put an end to Nachman's suffering. (This murderer later died in a similar accident.)

On the eve of the Christian holidays something happened that resulted in a lot of trouble for the Szydlowiecers. The Germans had set up four new ghettos. One of them was Szydlowiec.

A group of Szydlowiecers in the camp organized themselves that first night and escaped. Some of them reached Szydlowiec. A few did not. With the mass escape, however, they didn't do us any good. When the S.S. discovered that the "fugitives" were all Szydlowiecers, they beat us up and took away our shoes, to prevent us from running away. One night the murderer Romanko and the Jewish policeman Gnott came into our barracks. I happened to be sitting and repairing my shirt. Romanko hit me such a blow on the head that the room started spinning.

They ordered all of us to dress and marched us over to the guardhouse, where there was a high-ranking S.S. officer. We thought this was the end. But the only order he issued was that we be taken back to the barracks.

The "shoe situation" became easier with the arrival of a shipment of wooden clogs that we called "Hollanders." They kept our feet warm, but the snow stuck to the soles and made it harder to walk.

Transports of Jews kept coming in from various cities. In one of them was the Radoshitzer Rebbe, his two daughters and

a son-in-law. It was the rebbe's fate to fall into the shell foundry. (I don't know how it happened, but the rebbe Yitzhok Finkler, who came to the camp with the Pyotrikower, was given an easier job — sweeping the rooms where the saws were located.) Foreman Haas saw to it that the Radoshitzer rebbe got enough soup, which he never ate, but traded it for food that he could eat. His son-in-law died not long after they came to the camp. One day, when Haas did not come in to work, a few of the Poles took advantage of the opportunity to beat the rebbe and give him the most dangerous jobs. We helped him do the work. The next day Haas roundly cursed out the Poles for what they had done to "my rabbi."

The food situation continued to worsen. A bowl of soup became a most precious commodity.

Working with us in the shell foundry was a non-Jew who kept trying to persuade Jews to run away. He even helped in the preparations to escape. But just when the Jew was "safely" on the other side of the barbed wire fence, he would inform the police. His reward was a bottle of schnapps or some sugar.

Once, as I stood at the hot oven, one of the Polish workers suddenly attacked me. Moyshe Blatman saw this and rushed to my defense. He hit the Pole so hard that he couldn't get up. Nothing was said about it, however, because Moyshe was an unusually good worker and his foreman interceded for him. I don't know whether Moyshe survived the war.

I had one acquaintance among the Poles whom I sent several times to the Christian woman with whom I had hidden my things. She told him: let him come himself and I'll give him everything he left here. She knew perfectly well that I would never come for them.

We began hearing rumors that our camp was going to be evacuated, that one transport would go to Czenstochow, and that the shell workers would have a choice: to go or to stay. When the rumors came true I chose the latter. The women were not given a choice; they were all evacuated.

After the evacuation, about 900 Jews were left in the camp. The next day, the head of the kitchen, during a rollcall, told Leybke Zakan to pick out ten hungry Jews. He chose me first and then asked me to choose the other nine. Only one of our landsleit was left: Moyshe Kuperberg. I chose another eight foundry workers and we were all given jobs in the big kitchen. I had never even dreamed about such good luck! The German head of the kitchen was a very fine man. It was hard to remember that he was a German. He saw to it that we didn't work too hard. One day he gave us tins of preserves and told us that if we were searched by the guards we should say that he had given them to us.

Those were my "seven good years." But they lasted only ten days. On the tenth day after the last Szydlowiecers left they sent us away too, but we didn't know where we were going...

They kept moving us from camp to camp until, on the 30th of April 1945, we were liberated by the American army.

GHETTO, HIDING-PLACE AND CAMP

by Abraham Weisbrot

In the summer of 1940 the Germans deported 1200 Jews from Szydlowiec to Juzefow and Janiczew. In Juzefow the camp was located in a school; others were put into a stable where they had knocked together some bunks out of boards. Without straw or blankets we slept on these boards after a hard day's work. A piece of black bread and a bit of watery soup was our meal. We worked ten hours a day "regulating" the Vistula. The work norm was: moving 80 wheelbarrows of earth from the river bank. People collapsed, fell unconscious. There was no medical aid of any kind.

For a little while the Szydlowiec Judenrat received permission to send us food, underwear, clothing. This helped us a great deal under those terrible conditions.

In late autumn, with the soil starting to freeze, they still made us work every day in the canal, where we stood knee-deep in water, shoveling out the mud.

They had promised to release us after four weeks in the camp, but after three months we were still there. Then we began "liberating" ourselves. Every day a few people tried to escape. This was not easy; people risked their lives to do it. And some didn't make it. Osher Kornbroit and I ran away together. When we reached the bank of the Vistula at Torle, a peasant rowed us across to the other side. We then wandered through villages, sleeping in farmhouses, until we reached Drilcz. There the Jews provided us with a wagon that took us to Szydlowiec.

In April 1942 the Germans again uprooted several hundred Jews. I say "uprooted" because this time no one reported voluntarily. Armed Germans ran from house to house, beat people savagely with clubs and blackjacks. They rounded up people in the street and forced them into trucks. On one of these trucks stood Rabbi Chaim Rabinowicz, his head bloody, as we looked on in helpless rage. Later they released the rabbi, but his 14-15-year-old son was taken away along with the grownups.

When we arrived at the Jedlne camp, near Radom, we found newly erected barracks in a field. As far as the eye could see, there was no sign of any living creature. There were no guards and no barbed wire fences. The work-place was about 3-4 kilometers away. The road led through a thick pine-woods. In the summertime, after a hard day's work, the clean air was refreshing. On cold days we chopped down trees, cut them up and carried the logs to the camp to heat the stoves.

They put us to work laying railroad tracks. We carried iron rails that were too heavy for our famished bodies. When we returned to the barracks we felt free, because there were no guards. In the evenings we sat and talked, even sang, and tried to forget our troubles.

We had no medical supplies of any kind. If a person felt sick he didn't go out to work. One day a military inspection team came to the barracks and found fourteen Jews who had not gone to work. They took them into the woods and shot them.

As soon as we heard the news that the Szydlowiec ghetto would soon be liquidated, I immediately made plans to go back to my hometown. The thought that I might never see my family again almost drove me out of my mind. This time luck was with me. I made the acquaintance of a German driver who took me to Szydlowiec, for which I paid him well.

On September 22, 1942, the day after Yom Kippur, the firebells suddenly started clanging. Szydlowiec was surrounded by Germans, Ukrainians and Lithuanians. That day the deportation started. Yankl Binstok and I decided not to go. With Abraham Zeigfinger and his brother Yankl we went to the hiding-place at the home of Melech Broniewski. The entrance was camouflaged with a chopping-board and buckets of water on a bench.

Fear and terror everywhere. Outside, the Germans were driving a whole community of Jews to their death; inside we lay crowded together in a space no bigger than a closet, sunk in gloomy thoughts. Our ears picked up every sound. No one uttered a word. We were afraid to do so, but what was there to talk about, and of what use were words as we watched our nearest and dearest being led to the slaughter?

Despite the deadly risk, we left our "bunker" in the middle of the day and somehow got through the haymarket to Radom Road and over to Swiercz, where I knew a farmer named Woicek. Back in 1939 he had promised to help me if I ever found myself in danger. He was a little disconcerted because there were four of us, but he put us all into his bar and we covered ourselves up with the hay.

After a week, our host came and told us unhappily that he could no longer let us stay there; the Germans had found one of

his neighbors hiding a Jew and burned his house down. Although I was running a high fever, I fled with the others, but after going a short distance, I was unable to continue. I went into a Polish House to ask for help. Ten minutes later, when I came out again, I no longer found any of my group. Seeing that I was alone and sick, the friendly Christian woman (whose name I don't know) told me I could stay, though she herself was trembling in fear of what might happen.

For five days I lay sick in a half-finished house. She fed me and brought me medicine until I recovered. Then I went to Pawlew, where an older Polish woman, a friend of my mother's, received me cordially and hid me even from her own husband, who was a dull-witted man. If he had known about this he would have killed us both. For seven days I hid in a small dark room. When everyone was asleep I would go outdoors for a breath of air and stretch my legs.

Again, the same thing happened. Fear of the Germans, of her husband, of her neighbors — it would not let her rest. I knew she was in great peril, so I told her that I had decided to get back to the ghetto, where there were still some Jews.

With the help of this Christian woman I managed to reach Szydlowiec. After some narrow escapes I got inside Fishl Eisenberg's tannery, where the so-called "Cleanup Commando" was quartered. They advised me to get away as quickly as possible; the longer I stayed, the closer I was to death. They told me that eight Jews who had smuggled their way into that place had been shot the day before.

Once again I took a chance. Anyway, I didn't have too much to lose. The next morning, when Commander Ostrowiec was leading the commando out to work I slipped into line. He made his report to the German camp commandant in the usual military fashion, listing the number of men in the various groups. When he finished, he pointed to me and said I was a newcomer. After sending all the others off to their work, the

Germans began their interrogation: Where had I been hiding? In whose house? What was their name? Each question was accompanied by blows, but I gave them no information. Then they took me to the police-station, where I saw that I wasn't the only one. Moyshe Briks and Motek Gershonowicz had also not been in the camp for rollcall the previous night.

That afternoon a Polish policeman came into our cell and informed us that a grave was waiting for us, and if we had money or other valuables, we might as well give them to him as to the Germans. Moyshe Briks was a close friend of mine for many years. When we heard this we fell into each other's arms to say farewell. We had lived together and we wanted to die together.

The next few hours dragged interminably. Whenever we heard footsteps outside the locked door we jumped. The cemetery was so close we could see it through the barred window.

That evening we heard a voice outside the window telling us not to worry. Later we learned that our friends had bribed the Germans by revealing the location of a hidden cache of goods worth several thousand zloty. This was the price of our "reprieve."

In this way I became a "legal" member of the Cleanup Commando. We witnessed such brutally murderous acts that sometimes we envied the condemned prisoners who had the privilege of a quick death.

One day we were ordered to pick up a Jew who had just been shot. Not far from the cemetery Notte Sheidman lay on the grass. He had always been quick and courageous, and that is how he died, resisting the murderer Bauer, who had caught him as he tried to climb a fence. A salvo of bullets cut short his young life.

They brought in Yehiel Neshe's daughter and her two little girls, six and eight years old. She told me that she had been hiding with the children in a tomb in the cemetery. When she

left the hiding-place to look for food for the children, the Germans caught her. She hoped they would let her and the children live. Two days later she and her two daughters were shot.

One day we noticed a small child of about four wandering around the streets. We recognized him — Lozer Sherr's son. We took him in and soon he began to feel at home with us. He wanted each one of us to be "his father." He began to overcome his fear. His eyes brightened. For us it was a moving experience. Seventy lonely, broken human remnants found in this child a ray of hope, of a new life, a kind of living monument to the dead. We all saw to it that he ate and that his clothes were clean.

A week passed this way, until Notte Broitman came in with an order: bring out the child. Instinctively the boy must have sensed that something terrible was about to happen. He refused to go out. His eyes pleaded with us: protect me. But no one could help him. At the cemetery, Camp Commander Karpinski was waiting for him. He put the child between his knees and with sadistical pleasure fired a bullet into his little head.

On November 11, 1942, as they were taking us to the munitions factory at Skarzysko, several of our group escaped into the villages and woods. Some even had Aryan documents.

That was the end of the Jewish community of Szydlowiec. The last of generations of Jews who, over the centuries, had established a beautiful community, until the Teutonic barbarians came and put an end to it forever.

HOW WE SAVED OURSELVES FROM DEATH

by Elka Silverman-Goldberg

Saturday, September 9, 1939 the German army entered Szydlowiec and almost immediately we felt the heavy hand of

the occupying power: taxes, curfews, anti-Semitism, Sturmer posters.

And the first victim, Notte Richter. German soldiers invaded the bet-midrash, the synagogue, the shtiblech, wherever Jews were praying. They drove everyone out, gave them brooms, forced them to clean the streets. With the arrival of winter, the situation grew even worse: stores, factories, workshops, all closed. Hunger stalked the town.

At about the time we first heard rumors of gas chambers, the Germans decreed that all women from 15 to 60 must assemble at the city hall square. Most women obeyed the order. Police ran among the crowd, selecting the youngest and the prettiest, put them on trucks going to labor camps. Among these women were my two sisters-in-law, Malka and Miriam. Miriam, my brother Leybl's wife, went in place of her younger sister Gitele.

Jews started coming to Szydlowiec from other areas of the country. Some people took this as a sign that the catastrophe was moving closer to us. The tension reached a climax when we learned that the trains were waiting at the railroad station.

Tuesday after Yom Kippur 1942, a new sensation: people say that the Judenrat no longer exists, that Chairman Morgenbesser has been arrested. People ask each other what to do. In the middle of the night we hear knocking on our windows. A new decree: Eight o'clock the next morning all Jews must gather in the marketplace. Taking the advice of my husband's partner, Yankl Blachasz, we go to a hiding-place in his home. They had a large oven for baking bread and drying grain-kernels. In the house proper the oven is all bricked in, but in the attic there is an opening covered with boards. Yankl's mother, Esther, my mother-in-law, told us that this had served as a safe hiding-place during the first world war.

During Hitler's war it served the same purpose. The space measured about four square feet; the ceiling was five feet high.

In that kind of hole, four of us hid: Yankl and I, his brother Leybl and his brother-in-law Getzl Rosenbaum.

My mother-in-law covered the entrance with the boards and went to the city hall together with my sister Beyla, my sister-in-law Hannah and her two little girls. As we said goodbye, everyone was sobbing and wondering if we would ever see each other again...

For hours we were pressed together as the air in the hiding-place grew harder and harder to breathe. We simply had to get out of there, even though we knew they might catch us as soon as we stepped out. We went up to the attic and looked out the window. We could hear loud shooting and horrifying screams. When it grew dark, we left the house, went along back streets to Dlugosa and then to a village where Yankl had a customer — people called him “Niewadzis with the crooked back.” At first he refused to help us, but then he relented and let us into his barn. Miriams’s sister and her young daughter were already hiding there. She went back to Szydlowiec disguised as a Christian woman, because her husband was still there.

After a few hours Niewadzis told us we had to leave — people in the neighborhood already knew that he was hiding Jews. We had no choice. Not far from this place another rich farmer let us stay for two nights. On the third day he hid us in a big hay-wagon and took us to a woods near Skarzysko. This cost us 500 zloty. With a lot of luck and after some narrow escapes we reached Skarzysko.

On Simchas Torah the order came for all Jews to report to a certain place; otherwise they would be shot. All the sick people in the hospital, since they could not report, were shot. Police, German foremen, Ukrainian guards — they all went through our ranks selecting the healthiest-looking people. Yankl, Leyble and myself were in that group. No one knew which was preferable — the trains or the Hasag. Among those taken away were my brother-in-law Leybl Goldner and his wife Hendl. Both later perished in Treblinka.

The healthy people were sent to the Hasag munitions plant. Along the road we saw pools of blood and dead bodies. Yankl and Leybl and I went to the Hasag. Getzl, our brother-in-law, his brother Isaac Rosenbaum and his bride, Feygl Alpert, my sister-in-law Hendl, my Aunt Esther Goldwasser and other relatives and friends went to their martyrdom in Treblinka.

In the Skarzysko camp we met Yankl's younger sister Malka and Leybl's wife Miriam. We were "lucky" in our work assignments, thanks to Miriam. I was assigned to the "mirror-machines." This work was not difficult. Two other girls and I sat at a large table on which stood a mirror. Along the surface of the table ran a tape with casings for bullets. Our job was to make sure that every casing had two holes, which were necessary to ignite the powder that exploded the bullet.

We worked in two shifts: one week the night-shift, the next week day-shift. At first we worked eight hours, later it was increased to twelve. The day-shift was tolerable, the night-shift much more difficult. Our eyes, suffering from the strain, kept closing. Hunger gnawed. It would have been a miracle if we hadn't missed a casing with clogged holes once in a while. A few times I made such a mistake out of weariness, but was saved from a charge of sabotage, which would have meant certain death.

In the second half of 1943 we began to sense that the Hitler offensive had not only been stopped on the most important fronts, but that the Germans were suffering defeats. They needed more and more workers; they kept bringing in fresh transports of Jewish slave laborers. All the Jewish towns and cities in Poland were "cleaned out." In the eyes of the German foremen the value of the Jewish concentration camp work rose.

Quietly they tried to improve our conditions a little. Camp inmates were given trousers, boots, coats. Even more significant: there were no more selections. New barracks were built, with plumbing and cold running water. They even

permitted us to have small stoves where we could cook our food. A spark of hope ignited in our hearts — perhaps we would still live long enough to be freed.

Because of the close contact with Poles in the factories, Jews began bartering and making things. With these earnings they could buy extra food. Tailors refurbished old clothing for the Poles; hatmakers made hats out of old rags; shoemakers repaired tattered shoes; some people made bags or baskets out of paper sacks. The Poles were glad to buy these things in exchange for food, bread, etc.

Jews made these things after their day's work. They were very inventive. Out of metal or aluminum they made combs, rings, pins. They cut the strings off the bullet-catchers and made colored thread, which was in great demand among the Poles. Jews sold cigarettes, saccharine, garlic, bread. Some even set up little stands in their bunks where they sold corn, kasha, butter, flour, even wurst.

All this was known to the camp commandant, but he "overlooked" it, as did the lower rank supervisors. The camp in "Works A" started to look like a Jewish shtetl. Religious Jews had their own rebbe and sometimes even davened in a minyan. Suddenly all this was permitted, because the Jews were needed for German production.

But even during this relatively better time in the camp, terrible things still happened. Our two friends, David Shchenshliva and Kornbloom, from Szydlowiec, who were members of the Bund youth organization, had come to the camp from Ostrowcie. They were accused of spying for the partisans. When they were being led out to be shot, they attacked the guard and tried to disarm him. But they failed. One of them ran away; the other was shot.

Another friend, Yehiel Kinel, who was accused of helping to smuggle out bullets for the partisans, was hung.

One day in July 1944 the camp authorities suddenly

carried out a selection at the gate. Several hundred Jews were chosen to die. One of them was Pinik Krull, a very strong young man who had been a porter in Szydlowiec. Even in the camp he made use of his great strength. But he had hurt his hand at work and was therefore caught in the selection. As he was being led away he cried out: "Jews, I know where they are taking us! May we be the last victims! If you survive, don't forget us!"

I mention this now to fulfill his last wish.

Not long after this last selection the Skarzysko camp was liquidated. Some people were sent to Czenstochow. Later, men and women were evacuated in separate trains — women to Leipzig, men to Buchenwald and then to Shlebin. From Leipzig they marched us for 14 days with hardly any food. Many died on the way. In one German village where we stopped, Malka, Miriam and I and a couple of girls from Hungary ran into a barn, collapsed on the hay and fell fast asleep. When we awoke, we learned that we had been liberated by the Americans. It was April 1945.

IN HASAG

by Menachem Rosenzweig

When I was still quite young I was rounded up with a group of other Jews and sent to Hasag. My family did not know where I was until three weeks later, when I sent a note to my parents through a Polish worker. Through that same man, my father sent me back a bundle of underwear and tefillin, along with a note reminding me to "davn" every day, so that God would help me. This remained with me as his last will and testament.

One day, going out to work, I noticed that a new transport of Jews, including many Szydlowiecers, had arrived at the camp. Imagine my surprise when I saw my father among them.

I could not approach him without endangering both our lives. Only our eyes met — and that was the last time I ever saw him. I never saw my dear mother Esther again, either.

Some time later the Ukrainians took us out to a place where a horrible sight met our eyes. The bodies of seven young women and five young men, all from Szydlowiec, lay on the ground.

Working on the night shift, they had tried to run away and return to Szydlowiec when it was declared a ghetto in December 1942. After we buried these martyrs the Ukrainian sadists ordered us to dance on the graves while they took our pictures.

For the observant Jew, life in the camp was even worse. They did the best they could. On Pesach, the cantor Yosl Mandelbaum gave me a cup of yellow cornmeal. (He had come from the camp at Plashew with many other Jews from Krakow.) On Sabbath and holidays he saw to it that there was a *minyan* in his barracks.

In the summer of 1944 I was liberated.

LUCK — GOOD AND BAD

by Fishl Kornbroyt

Because of the frequent German raids, our parents had constructed a special hiding-place for us, but in that terrible month of July 1942 it didn't work. And just as my brother and my three sisters and I stepped into the courtyard, the guards caught us and put us into the back of a truck. There were already two Jewish boys and a bound calf in the truck, so we were certain they were taking us somewhere to shoot us, because any Jew caught with meat in his possession could be put to death.

But this time a miracle happened. On the way, the Germans dropped the calf off somewhere and brought us to the Skarzysko munitions plant called "Hasag."

The work in the camp was very hard. Wearing rubber boots, I stood up to my knees in water containing various chemicals which burned holes in my hands and feet. By a galvanizing process, I made copper out of iron. My sisters and my mother were given easier jobs to do, but fear, hunger and tension made us all feel very depressed.

We stayed in Hasag for two years, until the summer of 1944, when they put us on trains and sent us to Czenstochowa.

Again we were lucky — we were together and shared our bit of bread and soup, until we were liberated by the Russians on January 16, 1945.

MY FIRST DAYS IN HASAG

by Hannah Bovnik-Broniewski

I was among the first to be sent to the Hasag camp, but I was too young then to comprehend what such a camp signified.

For a long time I worked in "Works B." Early in 1944 they moved me to "Works A," where the work was much harder. In Works B it had at least been possible to get a potato once in a while.

Fortunately I didn't stay there long. During the last selection I was sent to the camp at Warta, in Czenstochowa, where the living conditions were much better. The Germans did not shoot any prisoners there, the food was better and the work was easier. I stayed there until January 17, 1945, when the Russians came and liberated us. Then a few of us managed to get to Szydłowiec, but we couldn't stay there, because the Poles threatened to kill us if we didn't leave.

A SEDER NIGHT IN THE SKARZYSKO CAMP

by Eliezer Levin

My old daughter and I were put into "Works C," where we were given easier work to do, thanks to two Polish foremen, former customers of mine. They helped us out with extra portions of bread and other things.

In this particular section there were several rabbis from Otwock-Polenice, the Radoshitzer Rebbe, the shochet from Nieswicz, the Wolbromer Rov, and the Rosh Yeshiva from Otwock. I helped them in whatever way I could — an extra portion of soup, a slice of bread, some Polish corn.

I was supervisor of a few young women from Skarzysko and Szydlowiec. Occasionally we went to work accompanied by a Polish foreman outside the camp in the village of Musawia. We took with us a few things to "sell" to the peasants there in exchange for butter, bread, corn. Some of it we ate and the rest we smuggled into the camp.

Shortly before Pesach the rabbis sent someone to me to ask for help, so that they wouldn't have to eat *chometz*. This gave me the idea of arranging a "seder" for the rabbis. I knew I had to tell the camp manager about this (her name was Markowitz) because without her consent nothing could be done.

I bought some fresh strawberries for her young daughter, sometimes fresh cucumbers or mushrooms. In this way I became a frequent visitor at her home. When I got to know her better I told her what we wanted to do, with her permission. I also asked if she would talk to the Jewish camp policeman (Feffer) so that the rabbis could bake matzo at night in the big ovens that heated the barracks.

Under camp conditions the baking of the matzo was a difficult and dangerous undertaking, but we overcame all the obstacles. We obtained all the ingredients by paying a lot of money for them.

Erev Pesach, as I was coming back from work, a camp policeman stopped me and ordered me to report immediately to Mrs. Markowitz. After she asked me a lot of questions, which I answered, she said:

"I wanted to be sure that you weren't making a private business out of this. I see that you handled the whole matter in an honest way. I've taken care of everything and I'm ready to help you — I'm going to give you 60 eggs for the rabbis." Anyone who was in Works C will understand what that gift of 60 eggs represented.

Precisely at ten o'clock, when everyone was asleep, the rabbis began the seder. They had each written down whatever they could remember from the Hagada. A holy silence spread over the room when we came to the Four Questions. At that moment it seemed that God Himself had no answers to all the questions that were pressing on our minds. A muted weeping accompanied every blessing and the entire reading of the Hagada.

IN THE GHETTO

by Choneh Piasek

When Yosl Katshala was sent to the munitions plant at Hasag he was only 16 years old, but his experiences there were those of an adult. His three sisters — Hannah, Kreindl and Devora were also in the camp. His chief concern was to keep them from going hungry. At the risk of life, he would often disappear from his work-place, in order to hunt up a piece of bread or a potato for his sisters and himself.

At first he worked in section where they finished rifle bullets. Then, by sheer accident, he became an electrician. This made it possible for him to move about the camp more freely. It also gave him a pretext to stop in at the kitchen, and he never left there emptyhanded.

But one day the guards at the factory gate caught him with a piece of meat in his possession. They beat him unmercifully, but Yosl did not reveal the name of his "partners."

When the Hasag camp was liquidated he was sent to Buchenwald, where he perished.

ONE OF MANY

by Miriam Silberman-Broman

When the Nazis occupied our town, my mother Sheindle was helping my father eke out a living. My father, who was then in his sixties, immediately felt their murderous paws.

One day, on his way home from the synagogue, they tore out his beard and left him lying bloody in the street. For weeks after that he was sick.

Miraculously, I was the only one left alive in my family. When the Germans caught my sister Gitele and wanted to send her to a labor camp, I volunteered to go in her place because I was older and stronger. I thought I would be better able to endure the hard times in the Skarzysko camp. The first few days there, however, convinced me that one could not get out of there alive. Then I had some "good luck." Basch, my German foreman, liked my work and appointed me to spoon out the soup.

This helped me a great deal to survive until the liberation.

IN THE CAMPS

by Feyge Schwartzfing-Tabris

When the war broke out I wasn't even 14 years old. I remember the burning synagogue and how the Jews tried to put out the fire. They were unsuccessful but they did manage to save the neighboring houses.

As long as the Germans let us live in our own homes we

somehow were able to endure all their cruelties. No matter how bad it was, there was still some feeling of safety. But that didn't last long. Soon they started driving us out and we sensed the beginning of the end.

Summer 1942 the Germans sent my father to the camp at Jelne, near Radom. He stayed there six weeks and then came home shortly before the liquidation of Szydlowiec. During the raid, when the whole city was surrounded by the S.S. and they were rounding up Jews for Skarzysko, my sister Leah and I were among those caught. We had never been separated from our parents before. Now we were crowded into a barracks with hundreds of other people. At first we thought we would never get used to this hell, but apparently human beings can endure terrible things.

Our two brothers, Yonah-Yehiel and Leybl, were also sent to Hasag, Works C. Leybl escaped with Notte Tepper and went to a peasant they knew in Smilew. As we later learned, this man kept them hidden for two days and then sent them away. Shortly afterward they were caught by the S.S. and shot.

In the summer of 1944 they sent many of us to Czenstochowa and from there to Bergen-Belsen. How we survived Bergen-Belsen I'll never understand. From there they sent us to Burgow, Tirkheim and Alach, where we were liberated.

FROM JUZEFOW TO HASAG

by Osher Kornbroyt

On August 20, 1940 I was among many Szydlowiecers that the Germans sent to the camp at Juzefow. The old inmates there were Jews from Warsaw. The work was very hard, with Polish foremen and German and Ukrainian guards. But I worked at that "job" only one day.

At the rollcall the next morning I heard that they were

looking for tailors. I reported immediately for that work and they took me, mainly because I had a slip of paper from the German Wehrmacht saying that I had worked for them as a tailor in Szydlowiec. My foreman was a Jew from Juzefow named Hanina Birnbaum. He treated me very well and even saw to it that I wouldn't have to go to the camp to sleep. Even though his house was crowded, he arranged for me to sleep there.

Birnbaum told me once that a tailor from our town, who had been in the camp, had offered him a large sum of money to take him into the tailor shop instead of me.

At the end of October the Szydlowiecers in the camp started running back to the shtetl. And even though our situation was comparatively good here, I wanted to be with my family, so I ran too. But here the hard work began for me again — cleaning the streets, shoveling snow off the roads, etc.

In August 1942 my brother Fishel and my youngest sister Roma were caught in a roundup and sent to Skarzysko. Shortly afterward, on "Bloody Thursday," when many Jews were shot, I and my sisters Miriam and Tola were also caught and sent to Hasag. Thus we were separated from our parents Leybush and Leah, our sister Toybe-Rochel and her husband Shlomo Steinovich and their three children, and also our youngest brother Hershele. I never saw them again.

In Skarzysko I was in "Works A," together with my brother Fishl and my sisters. My work was not as hard as Fishl's. The general conditions in the camp were inhuman and I would not have lasted there very long. But fortunately the camp was liquidated. From there they sent me to Czenstochowa. My brother and sisters were sent to Pelzern. Six months later we were liberated and met in Poland. We went to Szydlowiec but found such a poisonous Jew-hatred among the Poles that we left our native city.

FROM CAMP TO CAMP

by Feitshe Eisenberg

In the ghetto I always tried to avoid all the roundups for labor camps.

On the day after Yom Kippur (Tuesday, September 22, 1942) we were expecting the Germans to deport all the Jews from Szydlowiec. I went to my friend Shmuel Zagdanski and with eight other Jews we hid in a well constructed bunker. I can still hear the cries and screams of the women and children and the crackling of the guns. Then it grew deathly silent. We didn't know what to do next. We were afraid to leave the hiding-place.

For several days we lay there until one day a Folksdeutsch stumbled upon us, apparently while he was looking for hidden Jewish treasure.

For a moment we were all struck dumb — including the Folksdeutsch. Finally we asked him whether there were any Jews left in the city. He told us there were some Jews at Pinkert's. We gave him a sum of money to take us there. Among the Jews hidden there were my parents.

Soon afterward all the Jews in Szydlowiec were sent to Skarzysko. During the deportation from Skarzysko I was selected to work in the Hasag camp. That same day, many of the Jews, including my parents, were sent to Treblinka.

The Hasag was a dreadful place. I worked there at a machine on which I often cut my hands. I was beaten by Poles and Germans. There was a German named Batenschlager who used to pick out the prettiest Jewish girls there, use them and then shoot them.

During the ten months that I was in Hasag I kept looking for a way to escape to Radom, as my sister Rivkele had done. Finally I arranged with a Pole to take me there for 1000 zloty.

Living with my sister and my Uncle Yisroel Goldberg, I

was able to breathe a little easier, but this didn't last long. The Germans soon sent me to Maidanek, then to Auschwitz, and then to the death camp at Ravensbruck. From there we went to a town called Malhauf, where we were liberated. My sister Sonya perished during her first days at Skarzysko. The rest of my family were murdered by the Germans at various places.

I CANNOT FORGET

by Hannah Frelich-Perl

It was a day before the first deportation. Many people believed that it was safer to go to Starchowicz. My Uncle Hershl Silberman, a Kuzmirer hassid, practically forced me to go there. Our barracks were in a place that had formerly been a firing-range for Polish soldiers. Now it was a vale of tears for young Jewish slave-laborers, where the Nazis carried out their executions. There, for the slightest "sin," they "tithed" us: they lined up all the inmates, counted off every tenth person and shot him or her, while the others watched. On more than one occasion, as the murderers counted 6, 7, 8, my heart pounded so hard I thought it would burst.

I worked very hard loading heavy guns and shells onto trains and in the worst weather — snow, frost and rain — twelve hours a day. The foreman was a demon in human form named Wirtz.

Because I was a quick worker, they chose me to distribute the food. I stood at a soup-kettle and ladled out the portions. The hungry Jews looked into my eyes, begging for a bit of soup. Opposite me stood the camp Commandant, watching every move I made. This job was considered a rare prize, but after a few days I asked to be relieved of it. I couldn't shake off the feeling that I was doing someone harm, that I wasn't properly stirring the soup before I put it into the bowl.

There was another sadistic foreman there named Altoph.

Unbelievable as it may sound, the only person who could restrain him was an exceptionally beautiful Jewish girl named Hannah Lachs. (We called her Lachsuvne.) But she wasn't always there when the monster started on one of his rampages.

Miracle of miracles. One morning I came down with typhus and couldn't get out of bed. Suddenly a voice yelled:

"Shtern-schoss, raus!"

It was our Shumuel Shchensliva, a landsman of the Jewish camp police. I begged him, "Shmuel, don't you see that I can't move?" But he paid no attention, just kept yelling and helping me put on my shoes and coat. Then he shoved me out and kicked me in the behind for good measure. With my last bit of strength I dragged myself to the line that was already marching out to work.

Not until the end of the day, when I limped back to the barracks with the help of a friend, did we learn of the terrible slaughter of 85 young women in our barracks. Then I understood what Shmuel had done for me with his yelling and shoving. Unfortunately he himself perished during the liquidation of the camp at Starchowicz.

How can one forget that?

From Starchowicz they sent us to the real death-camp — Auschwitz. When we finished the whole ceremony of "delousing" — soap, shower — we were all certain it was the end. We didn't believe our overseer's assurances that we had nothing to fear because we had come here with a recommendation as good workers.

This time, however, it turned out that they were telling the truth.

I worked at Auschwitz for several months, then we were evacuated to Lower Silesia, where we worked in a weaving mill. This was the best camp I had ever been in. When the battlefronts came closer, we were again evacuated. At the Czech-German border we were liberated.

AMONG GOOD CHRISTIANS

by Bronek Tsingisser

Bronek and Janek — two non-Jewish names which my brother and I bore during the terrible Hitler times. My brother was ten; I was six.

Under the name of Bronek my parents (Boruch and Naomi) put me into the hands of Jagelo, a Pole in the village of Kszenczyn. My tears and my pleas were to no avail when this Christian came to take me to his house, which was six-seven kilometers from Szydlowiec. It was the last time I ever saw my dear mother and my sisters Hannah-Sarah and Rosa.

For the first couple of days my father stayed with me. He knew it wouldn't be easy for me to become accustomed to such a different life.

Jagelo introduced me to peasant children my own age. He taught me to pasture his geese on the nearby meadows. His wife taught me how to cross myself and how to say the Christian prayers. From time to time my father would come and visit. After he left I missed my home even more.

During the first deportation my mother and my sisters were sent to Treblinka. My father and my brother Janek (Yakov-Yitzhak) came to Kszenczyn one dark night and stayed with Jagelo. My brother and I used to hang around with the peasant children in the village, but my father stayed hidden in a special little room.

Soon our presence became a source of suspicion among the neighbors, and my father started thinking about another hiding-place. When he learned that there was still a ghetto in Pshyskhe, the three of us went there in the middle of the night, but a few days later that ghetto was suddenly surrounded by S.S. and police and we were caught in the trap. With us at the time were also my father's cousins, Hershl and Moshe

Tsingesser. For a large sum of money and jewelry the German guards let us get away.

My father, who knew the area well, brought us back to the Jagelo's. Here our group of five was increased by three more Szydlowiecers — Pinchas Meir Greenberg, Menahem Lefcowich and his wife Shifra. The good-hearted Jagelo, who couldn't say no to anyone, put us all in a hiding-place in his barn.

We stayed there until the end of February. One night the Gestapo came and surrounded the entire village. My father was killed. The rest of us managed to escape. Jagelo was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. My brother and I continued to hide with Jagelo's widow. Our childish intelligence did not grasp how dangerous this situation was.

The others in our group found a hiding-place in the nearby village of Kozitsa. One night the peasants in the village attacked them and tried to rob them. The group put up a fight. Pinchas Meir Greenberg and one of the attackers were killed.

Menahem Lefcowitch (Japek) and his wife Shifra then hid in the village of Zimoki, several kilometers from Kszenczyn. Moshe and Hershl decided to return to Szydlowiec; they had no money and no hope of finding a place to hide. The one thing they owned was a hand-grenade. They reached Szydlowiec safely, went into the city hall and exploded the grenade. Both brothers were killed instantly, but they took down with them a number of Germans and Poles who were in the building. It was a modern version of Samson's "I will die with the Philistines."

In the village of Wisocki, near Kszenczyn, the Zucker brothers had a hiding-place. They too were betrayed by their neighbors and were killed by the Gestapo. Menahem and Shifra had a good hiding-place but were betrayed by peasants shortly before the liberation.

My brother and I survived only thanks to the benevolence of Jagelo and his wife. Jagelo perished in Auschwitz. His wife,

even while her husband was in Auschwitz, continued to shelter us. They both are truly among the "Righteous of the Nations." One of them paid with his life; the other risked her life every moment of every day during the long five years that we were with her.

THE CAMP AT WOLONOW

by Motl Eisenberg

The labor camp at Wolonow had more than a thousand Jewish slave laborers. The camp had two sections — one for men and one for women — about 200 meters apart. Each section was surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence. The entrance was through a small, narrow door, guarded day and night by the Jewish police.

Inside the barracks were three tiers of bunks, in each bunk sleeping two-three people. Each worker received 250 grams of bread a day, plus several hundred grams of sugar or marmalade a week. Every evening after work they gave us soup. Five o'clock in the morning the police woke us up. At six o'clock we lined up and were marched by Jewish policemen three or four kilometers to the work-place.

The labor camp consisted of a large field, about ten square kilometers, on which stood various buildings, brick and wooden. The entire area was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence closely guarded by German soldiers. The various work projects were run by German companies. Some of the smaller projects were run by Polish companies. The attitude toward the Jewish workers varied, depending on which company you worked for and also, who the supervisor was.

I myself landed in a Polish firm called "Fertino" which was constructing a building for an electrical transformer. At the beginning the Jews there had nothing to complain about, but gradually it grew worse, almost intolerable. The foreman, a

Pole from Radom, began to speed up the work, and whenever he became angry, he beat people with whatever piece of lumber was handy. Later we were assigned a young Pole — one of the “Junakes” — people who volunteered their services to the Germans and were given special uniforms. His job was to “inspect” our work. He terrorized us and frequently beat us with a rubber truncheon.

One Sunday morning they selected a hundred men and women to do a certain job for the “Arktropic” Company. They marched us out beyond the camp to lay heavy cables into deep ditches. The workers, lined up about two meters apart, put their shoulders under a heavy cable. The effect was a long line of men carrying the cable all along the ditch and then lowering it slowly and carefully to the ground. Then we shoveled the earth back into the ditch, covering the cable. The job was “managed” by a tall young German named Razzi, who ran around like a wild man, hitting whoever he felt like over the head with his truncheon.

As we carried the cable, we had to cross a stream over a “bridge” that consisted of two long pipes. Razzi and another supervisor stood on the bank, and whenever one of the men stepped out onto the pipes, they yanked the cable, so that many lost their footing and fell into the water. For these murderers the whole thing was an entertaining spectacle.

At the beginning of November there was an outbreak of typhus in the camp. It was a matter of great concern. Many Jews with symptoms of the disease continued to work. They could barely stand on their feet. They couldn’t keep their eyes open. But they were afraid to report in sick. The camp council considered measures to prevent the epidemic from spreading, but what could they do? The barracks were crowded, there was no place to wash your body or your underwear. Most of the people there were malnourished. Their shoes were tattered and their light clothing was no protection against the elements.

One afternoon an automobile drove into the camp with armed Ukrainians in black uniforms. They rounded up those Jews who had remained in their barracks that day and shot every one of them. The next morning we lined up as usual and were marched off to work as though nothing had happened.

One day toward the end of November the Jewish police ordered everyone to report to the yard. There was a lot of commotion and excitement in the camp that day. The police tried to keep things calm by telling us we were going to be given a medical examination because of the sickness in the camp. We shaved, we changed our underwear, put on our other shirt, filled a sack with daily necessities, and waited. I took the money I had with me and divided it up among the members of my family. I said farewell to my wife at the fence around the women's camp. She looked at me with tearfilled eyes that had one question in them: Would we ever see each other again?

We lined up in the yard. The German commandant passed up and down between the rows, looking into every face. Whenever he saw one that looked too old or too young, or that hadn't been properly shaved, he ordered that person to step out of line. Later he ordered us to march in step. Those who limped or who didn't keep time were also ordered to fall out of line.

Gradually the group grew to about 150 Jews.

My work group was then ordered to march to the other end of the camp, behind the barracks. When we got there they ordered us to clean up the area of all the rocks and construction materials that lay strewn all over the ground. Our nerves were stretched to the breaking point. Our arms couldn't lift anything. Questions gnawed at our mind: What would happen to the Jews who remained? What was going on in the women's camp? What would happen to the sick people in the barracks?

Suddenly, a shot. Then another and another. There is only one explanation: they are shooting the remaining Jews.

The sound of shooting moves closer and closer. The bullets are flying not far from us. One man says: "They've finished with the others, now it's our turn." We can see the murderers dragging the sick out of the barracks and shooting them even before they are out the door.

We grow more and more tense. We pick up things and move them one place to another. There is no place to run. The entire area is surrounded by a double barbed wire fence. Every move we make is being watched. Any suspicious activity can mean instant death.

Near me is my older son Moshe. The shooting finally stops, but no one moves. In the distance I see my youngest daughter running. (She worked in the warehouse of the men's camp.) She is running quickly, looking from side to side. When she comes closer and sees us we start crying, without saying a word.

Now all the men start running toward the women's camp to find out what is happening there — to their wives, daughters, sisters, brides. The camp is guarded by Jewish police who won't let anyone in. I move away and go off to one side. I notice my wife standing at the fence. We had barely exchanged a word when a Jewish policeman comes up behind me and hits me in the head several times with his club.

Despite the police, however, a steady stream of men is flowing toward the women's camp. They try to find out where their dear ones are, people meet, fall into each other's arms and weep uncontrollably. Those who can't cry run around, shouting and screaming like madmen, their voices inhuman.

Early the next morning the Jewish police again wake us up to go to work. Some of the men are assigned to the job of collecting the victims of yesterday's shooting.

In the evening we come together to pray and to say kaddish for the martyrs.

KINGDOM OF DEATH

by Jacob Pomerantz

Some time after the Germans occupied Szydlowiec they set up a Judenrat consisting of: Abraham Redlich, President; Morgenbesser, Abraham Rosenbaum, Pinchas Shteinman, Hershl Vester, Moshe Berger, members; Abraham Finkler, Secretary.

For a while the Judenrat was able to make some things easier. They found ways to “moderate” the representatives of the occupation authority in the ghetto. But then the situation grew worse and worse and the Judenrat was practically helpless.

The Nazis found traitors and collaborators among other peoples: Quislings, Petains. Regrettably, they also found informers and despicable characters among Jews, people who thought they could save their own necks that way. Szydlowiec also had several informers, but generally, it can be said that no one stepped over another’s body. On the contrary, people helped each other.

Szydlowiec had a Judenrat, Jewish police. Possibly there were injustices in making work assignments or buying “protection” with money, but in general the Judenrat acted within limits and stood guard to protect the Jews of Szydlowiec by bribing Germans with gifts and money. Even in the concentration camps Szydlowiecers tried to stay together. Some helped each other, even suffered for one another.

Just a few facts about myself and others. Early in 1943, in Starchowicz — it was only a couple of months after I had been hit by a bullet and a few weeks after I had had typhus — the Germans carried out one of their selections and luckily they overlooked me. One of the Jewish camp leaders, however, a certain Wolfowicz, pointed to me and they called me back.

At the same moment, another Szydlowiecer, Shmuel Shchenslive, stepped up and said to Oberscharfuhrer Kalditz) "This man is my policeman, he takes me to work every day." Because Shmuel stuck his neck out for me, I stayed among the living. To my great distress, Shchenslive later was killed himself while trying to escape.

Another incident: During the typhus epidemic in Starchowicz many people died. I was swollen all over and could not go out to work, but Rochel-Leah Cooperman, as soon as she found out about it, sent food to me in the camp every day from the "mess-hall." And our Zelda Weizhandler, after I was burned at the oven and my face was so full of scabs that I couldn't come into the mess-hall, brought out food to me quite a few times and often gave me her own portion of bread.

It was difficult to remain human in that deadly gehennum, but many Szydlowiecers passed the test.

STARCHOWICZ

by Jacob Shapshewich

In the summer of 1942 it was becoming more and more difficult to live in Szydlowiec. You couldn't go out into the street without being rounded up for some kind of forced labor.

My brother Shima and I and a group of friends therefore decided to try our luck in the labor camp at Starchowicz. Yankl Cooperman and I went there first and made the acquaintance of the German Works Director Schwertner. For a couple of finished pieces of calves-leather he sent a truck to Szydlowiec to pick up 30 young Jews and bring them to Starchowicz. In exchange for a sum of money we were given a pass that showed us to be workers in the "Herman Goering Works." We used to work there only one or two days a week, then buy a new pass and go back to Szydlowiec.

In July 1944 a friendly peasant told me that the Soviet

army was approaching Starchowicz. Since we knew that the Gestapo was killing all prisoners before the German army retreated, I decided to run away from the camp. My sister Sala decided to stay.

It is difficult to say whether it was organized or not, but late that night the prisoners broke down the metal fence and a large number tried to escape, despite the hail of bullets. Most were killed. I was one of the lucky ones who escaped.

I stayed hidden for six months, wandering from one place to another. There was danger at every step. Summertime I slept out in the open field, buried in a haystack. My "meals" consisted of vegetables that I dug out of the earth. Winter was much more difficult.

Hanging around Szydlowiec, I used to meet Christian acquaintances with whom I had gone to school. They would shout at me, "Jakob, you're still alive?" And then would come the excuses — they couldn't take me into their homes because of their mother, or because of an aunt, or because they were afraid of the Germans. In truth, the danger for them was very real. The courageous and noble among them often paid with their own lives and the lives of their dear ones for the "crime" of hiding Jews.

In looking for a hiding-place I discovered that Moshe Briks was in a peasant's house in a nearby woods. For three nights I waited outside the house. Not until the fourth night did I notice a shadowy figure moving toward the farmhouse. It was indeed Moshe. When he first noticed me he turned on his heels in fright. I called out "*Amcho!*" — he stopped and waited for me to approach. It was a silent reunion with many tears of joy and sorrow.

Together, the situation was easier for both of us. We felt less isolated. When the nights turned colder we looked for shelter. By accident we found a poor farmer who promised us, with his wife's agreement, that he would hide us in his barn.

He added that since he would not be able to go out to work now, we would have to support his family — of ten. We gave him all the money we had.

For two weeks things went well. We were more or less at ease, although it was very cold in the barn, with the wind howling through the cracks. The third week, however, our Jozef started demanding more money — which we didn't have. In that case, he advised us, go out and steal it. He even offered to help us. He gave us two large sacks and told us to try our luck and skill in a nearby village. He gave us directions to a rich farmhouse where he had once worked. In the barn, he said, we would find a storehouse of wheat. We were to bring back as much of it as we could carry. But beware of the dog.

The constant pressure of living with death had left us in a state of apathy. We accepted his proposition and became thieves. One moonlit night, with the ground blanketed by snow, we started out for the farmhouse. I knew the area well. The air was motionless and not very cold. We found the place without any problem, but the barn door was locked. Moshe used his pliers to pull the nails out of the rotting boards and we opened the door quietly. Quickly filling our sacks with wheat, we got back safely to our "boss," who was waiting for us with a pot of potatoes and cabbage.

We went out on one other such "expedition" but this time it turned out to be a failure because the "merchandise" we brought back was not worth very much.

In January 1945 the great Soviet offensive began. A few days later we were liberated.

Four decades have passed since those difficult days. When I think about it today it is hard to believe that we had so much strength and will power to endure.

ONE DANGER AFTER ANOTHER

by Jacob Binshtok (Australia)

I was born in Wierzbnyk, 30 kilometers from Szydlowiec. My family moved to Szydlowiec in 1931.

During the first deportation I hid in a fake wall, along with Abraham Weisbroth and Abraham Rosenfeld. Then we hid in the village of Chustek, four kilometers from Szydlowiec. The good peasant Woicsek could hide us only a couple of days, however; he was afraid of informers among his neighbors. So we decided to go to the labor camp at Starchowicz. On the way we ran into a gang of Poles. I barely managed to get away alive. Somehow I reached Wierzbnyk and from there to Starchowicz, where I worked for 18 months.

Then a group of us ran away and made contact with Polish and Russian partisans and took part in several battles.

In mid-December 1944 I was liberated and went back to Szydlowiec. But my heart drove me to countries that are far away from our great unknown cemetery in Poland.

THREE SISTERS IN THE CAMPS

by Rachel Lederman-Tselnick and Sonia Lederman-Monk

During the deportation from the ghetto we lost two sisters. When we saw that the situation could only get worse, we took our mother's advice and went to Starchowicz. She gave each of us some money and jewelry.

But as soon as we got to Starchowicz we discovered that they were expecting a deportation there too, so we turned around and went to Wolonow. With the help of many Szydlowiecers we were taken into the camp "legally," and given work assignments. Rachel was fortunate enough to be placed in a laboratory as a dental technician. Not only was it easier for her there, but she was able to help us too. Shortly

afterward, our father also came to the camp and was "legalized" in the work force. The treatment in this camp was better than in many others, but they carried out frequent selections.

During an epidemic in the camp the Germans shot all the sick people they found in the barracks. I and Sabina (Sheyndl) also fell ill, but with the help of our sister Rachel and of a policeman named Kamfbel we escaped the claws of the executioner.

On the first day of Hanuka there was a selection in the camp in which 120 Jews were shot. One of them was my father.

In the spring of 1943 the camp at Wolonow was liquidated, leaving behind a mass grave of Szydlowiecer and Radomer Jews. The survivors were divided into three groups — one group was sent to Radom, another to Starchowicz, the third to Bliszin. We were in the third group.

In July 1944 they liquidated the camp at Bliszin and sent us by train to Auschwitz. Along the entire way we three sisters stayed together. At Auschwitz they took everything away from us and shaved our heads. Then they sent us into the showers. When we came out there, we didn't recognize each other. People became hysterical, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. After the delousing, they sent us to Birkenau, where there were gas chambers.

Four o'clock in the morning, in the cold, the rain or the snow, they woke us up and lined up for rollcall. We had to stand there until six o'clock. They gave us neither work no food.

Then our sister Rochtshe was assigned to work in the infirmary. This made life a little easier for us, except that we were afraid of Dr. Mengele and his entourage, who made frequent selections. During one rollcall, eleven out of the 500 women were selected. They were all young and healthy. Here we were "lucky" again — all three of us were among the

eleven. We were desperately afraid of the operations they might make on us, but this time the fright turned out to be the worst of it. The next day they took us to Hindenburg, a camp with the same rules as Auschwitz. The camp commandant was the "famous" Tauber from Auschwitz. The work was hard, but the conditions were better.

At the end of 1944 they again lined us up for a march to the railroad station, where the open box cars were waiting. In the bitter cold weather they dragged us from camp to camp, but no one wanted us. This went on for three weeks. Part of this time we marched on foot, part of the time we were packed into trains. After three weeks we arrived at Bergen-Belsen. There we suffered until April 15, 1945, when we were liberated by the British.

IN THE CAMPS

by Leybl Silberman

After a selection at the Hasag camp they loaded us all into freight trains, one hundred to a train, but where they were taking us, no one knew. The train stopped at a station, they took out the women, and we started moving again. With us were many policemen and supervisors from the Skarzysko camp. Some of them had the death of innocent people on their hands and they trembled for their lives.

Finally the train stopped at Buchenwald, a name that cast a pall of fear over us. They ordered us to sit on the ground. Kapos from the camp came and told us that we needn't be afraid, that we were only going through the "delousing" process. They sent us into a building through a small door. We could see people going in, but no one coming out. This must be the end, we thought.

They examined us thoroughly, shaved the hair off our heads and other parts of the body. With a brush they smeared

something on us that caused a burning sensation all over the body. And finally they let us stand under the hot showers. From there we went into a large room where they threw underwear and some striped clothing at us and led us into a place marked BLOCK M.

We were not treated badly here, although it was already late August or early September 1944, when the Germans were being badly beaten on all fronts. We were amazed by the humaneness of the kapos and the supervisors, among whom were many Jews from our areas. They asked us the names of the supervisors in Skarzysko who had tormented us. We gave them the information and they wrote everything down.

In the morning they gave us our ration of food. To us it seemed as if we had landed in a hotel. Later we learned the reason for their attitude toward us: our supervisors belonged to a well organized underground movement. They gave us light work to do in the camp yard. But we saw the former camp supervisor of Skarzysko, a man named Tepperman, harnessed together with another murderer (a Gypsy), pulling a wheelbarrow loaded with earth and rocks. Tepperman was ashamed to meet our eyes.

After several weeks they took us to Shlibn. There were about twenty Shidlovtser in that camp. We stayed together and tried to be put in the same Block, but were not always successful. My brother Yankl and I and Pesach Zagdanski were assigned to a foundry that made the "Panzerfaust," an anti-tank device. It was a kind of bottle filled with an explosive (Trotil) and attached to a pipe. The chemical was harmful to our lungs and made our skin yellow. Anyone who worked at this job was given a special fatty soup every day to counteract the poison. It did not help much. You couldn't last long at this job, but the extra portion of soup was a real inducement. Thus we kept risking our lives every day because it was better than starving to death.

We worked in two shifts. Our foreman happened to be a good person named Meltzer. One night — I think it was Simchas Torah — a terrible explosion shook the factory. The flames spread quickly to other buildings. The electric power was cut. The roof caved in over our heads. My brother and I managed to get out.

Who had caused the explosion? No one knew, but people said it was sabotage.

Among those who died in the explosion were 14 Shidlovtzers. From our barracks alone, five Shidlovtzers were missing. I remember the names of only four) Abraham Moshe Eisenberg, Yankl Shliski, Motl Kroyevsky and Yankl Paris. Among the wounded, who were sent back to Buchenwald and died there, was Zalman Broman, my brother-in-law. The Pietrkower Rebbe, Yitzhok Finkler, also perished in that explosion.

After that, a very difficult time began for us. They made us clean up the debris from the explosion. Brigades of young S.S. men came in. We had to work long hours "on the double." The young murderers lined us up in two rows. They each carried a blackjack that had a metal stud fastened to the end of it. Anyone who was hit with that kind of blackjack fell to the ground with his head split open. At the end of one particular work-day we were in such a state of exhaustion that the German foreman, a decent man, berated the S.S. men.

Things continued to change for the worse. The food ration became smaller and smaller, to the point where we were afraid we would starve to death. One way to still the hunger was to cook "corn." It happened that some of the farmers around Shlibn now had Italian war prisoners working for them. The peasants brought the raw material into the camp and took home the finished material. In this way the Italian prisoners came into the foundry. When they learned that we had cigarettes "for sale" they stole sacks of corn, smuggled them

into the camp and traded them for our cigarettes. The corn also came in through other sources.

My brother Yankl and I and our friend Pesach bought a cup of corn. We dried out the grain until it was brown, then we ground it down (using bottles) until it was kasha. Wood for cooking we brought to the factory. One cup of corn like this yielded three plates of soup. Mixed with margarine, it was very tasty. We called it "manna." Someone even invented a little mill to grind the corn — that would cost you two spoonsful of the raw grain. One such inventor was a friend of ours from Szydlowiec — Azriel Bergman.

I have written about this to show how Jews found ways to survive even in the worst of conditions. Had the Germans not been such murderers, many more Jews would have survived even in the concentration camps.

It didn't take long before the camp at Shlibn was liquidated too. For our "trip" to another place we still had a few cups of corn left. With us was Yerakhmiel Tenenbaum, youngest son of Berish and Beyla Tenenbaum. We tried very hard to keep him alive, but when we got to Teresienshtadt, he died.

On May 9, 1945 we were liberated.

LEAP FROM A DEATH TRAIN

by Abraham Tseigfinger (Paris)

In Skarzysko they assigned me to the "karabinuvka." My brother Yenkl landed in the worst section of the camp — the bullet foundry. He worked there only a short time before he fell ill with typhus. At the first selection the murderers in Works C shot him.

Early June 1943. I was no longer in the camp, because as soon as I learned that Szydlowiec had been declared a ghetto, I

ran back there. Life in the ghetto was much better than in the camp, but I didn't think it would last long. The guards were the same cut-throats. One of them was the infamous Bauer. Karpinski was already gone. Bauer shot Fishl Cooperschmidt and several others when he met them outside the ghetto limits.

The winter was a very cold one and it was hard to find firewood. Jews froze to death. One morning a woman tried to wake her two little daughters; one of them was already dead.

On January 13th the ghetto was suddenly surrounded. They rounded up all the Jews and marched them to the railroad station, where the trains were already waiting for their victims. The only things I took with me were a tea-kettle full of water and a pressing-iron. Thanks to the latter I am still alive.

When they shoved me into the train, I fought my way to a little window covered with barbed wire. As soon as the train started moving I set to work ripping the barbed wire off the window with the sharp edge of the iron. It took a long time. When the train began slowing down, I gave my pot of water to a woman who was running a fever. Realizing what I was planning to do, she put a large sum of money into my pocket and said "may God help you."

I asked a couple of men to boost me up and I jumped out of that rolling grave. Falling into a snowbank, I didn't even bruise myself. One other man jumped out after I did. He was a Volhynian named Korman. He too landed safely. We were not far from Demblin. The train kept rolling toward Treblinka.

My plan was to go back to the camp at Skarzysko. Korman decided to go into the villages around his home town. We wished each other good luck and separated.

I walked a long time before I came to Radom, where I was lucky enough to catch a train going to Kielce. From there I made my way to Szydlowiec. I went to the home of a Christian woman, who gave me a meal in exchange for some money. At night I started out for Skarzysko and slipped through the same

hole in the fence that I used when I escaped. The people in the camp stared at me as if I had just come back from the dead.

Miraculously, my punishment for running away was a light one — they sent me to Works C. The usual penalty for such a crime was death.

I stayed in Skarzysko until 1944. During the evacuation from this camp I was sent to Warta, and then to Germany. I “did time” in Buchenwald, Troeglitz and Teresienstadt, where I was liberated on May 8, 1945.

ESCAPE

by Mordecai Richter (Melbourne)

When the Germans occupied Szydlowiec they declared a state of war. The first thing they did was to order a six o'clock curfew. My brother Notte worked with Moshe Notte Vester. Coming home from a work a few minutes after six, he was stopped by two gendarmes near the Talmud Torah and shot on the spot. People heard his cries for help, but they were afraid to go out into the street. The next morning we found his body. He was the first victim in Szydlowiec.

I was then barely fifteen. My father told me to run away. He advised all his children to save themselves in any way they could. So I went to my friend Leybush and we both decided to run away from Szydlowiec. In the city hall we were given a permit to travel by train and we went off to Radom. From there we went to Shedlitz and kept on going until we reached the Soviet border, where we stole across.

I wandered through Bialistok, Rovno and Kovlo. I made a good impression on people because I was young and energetic. Thinking always of my parents and my family, I worked hard in the Soviet Union, suffered cold and hunger. At times I earned as much money as everyone else there. When the war ended I went back to Szydlowiec.

A Pole advised me not to stay there, however, because of the anti-Semitism. He gave me some money and took me over to the home of Materek the Drunk, who also advised me to get away from there as soon as possible.

I took their advice.

ACROSS THE BORDER

by Shmuel Chustecki

When the Second World War broke out I was in Warsaw. I lived through the terrible bombardments and the murderous acts of the Nazis and I also took part in the Defense of the Polish capital. When the resistance of the Poles was broken and the Germans occupied Warsaw, I no longer deemed it necessary to stay there and I went back home to Szydlowiec.

The distance from Warsaw to Szydlowiec is about 120 kilometers. How was I to make that trip in such a dangerous time? All the rail lines were down. On foot, I could be icked up by a German patrol at any time and sent somewhere for forced labor, or worse. But the need to be home; to know what was happening with my family, was stronger than the feeling of fear, and I decided to make the journey on foot. Luck was with me.

The people in our shtetl were in a state of despair. They didn't know what would happen next. They lived in perpetual fear, though there had been no further acts of violence. Shoemakers and tailors found a little work to do, filling private orders for German soldiers, who paid honestly for the work. The rest of the Jews continued quietly to eke out some sort of living.

To the persistent question of what to do next, my answer was that whoever could do so should try to get to the Soviet border. My thought was that the war would go on for years, and that during that time the jews here would all die. So Meir

Buchbinder, Esther Pomeratnz and I started getting ready for the journey. Our decision to leave Szydlowiec was hastened by the German decree that anyone who had ever served time in prison or been sentenced for communist activities must report to the assembly point at the city hall. There was no doubt what that meant.

I said goodbye to my friends and family and embraced my parents for the last time. It was an early autumn morning when I left the house with moist eyes and a premonition that this separation was forever. I headed toward Antetska's building in order to use the back streets to the railroad station. Instinctively I turned my head and looked back. My mother was standing in the middle of the street, watching me walk away.

I continued walking across this soil where every foot of ground was dear to me. Now I was leaving it to the boots of the brutal Hitlerites.

WHEREVER OUR EYES TOOK US

by Shlomo Rosenzweig (Melbourne)

On the day of the deportation I stood together with all the other Szydlowiecērs in the town haymarket. My fate, however, was to stay behind with the workers who were selected to clean up the ghetto.

I cannot forget the picture that I saw as I came into the home of my brother Akiba's father-in-law, Itche Hersh Brivntreger. He was lying dead in his bed with his brains spilling out of his head. The S.S.-man who took us in there explained that he had been shot with dum-dum bullets.

Our quarters were at Fishl Garber's tannery. After a hard day's work full of pain and terror, I fell asleep and then felt that someone was trying to wake me up. When I opened my eyes, I could not believe them — it was my brother Berl. He

told me he had jumped out of the moving train not far from Treblinka. He had first thrown his coat and hat out to make it appear that someone was jumping from the train, than he waited until the guards finished shooting at the coat.

He had come back here, he said, to take revenge on the Nazis for his wife and three children, for his parents, for his whole family, whom he had left behind on the train. He was going into the forest or to the village where he was born.

For three years he wandered around the area. Only six days before liberation he was murdered by Poles near the village of Wolonew.

I was liberated in Teresienstadt.

DEATH IN TOULOUSE

by Yosl Silverstein (Melbourne)

My sister, Esther Kaufman, emigrated to Paris in 1934 and lived a modest life with her husband Leybl. When the flames of war engulfed France, she was a mother of two children. As I was told by Mendl Chamentowski, the Germans deported my brother-in-law to a camp where he died with many other Szydlowiecs.

When the situation in Paris became too dangerous, my sister and her two children went to Toulouse. She settled her children with Christian families on two different streets and she lived alone on a third street. She thought that if things grew really bad, maybe at least one of them would survive.

But she had not counted on one thing. She forgot that a list of all the Jewish children was in the possession of the Judenrat in Toulouse. This list fell into the hands of the S.S. One day they rounded up all the Jewish children, including my sister's. The French woman immediately came and told her what had happened. My sister ran to save her children, but

instead, fell into the net herself. People had warned her, but she said she wanted to share the fate of her children.

And she did.

UNDER THE NAZIS IN FRANCE

by M. Dreynodl

During the Nazi occupation of France I lived in Roanne, not far from Lyons. I took my wife and two children to a village, hid them there with good Christians, and joined the French resistance movement. This happened in a strange way.

In the attic of my apartment there was a hiding-place. One day, while a friend of mine was visiting me, the Gestapo suddenly broke in. My friend managed to escape through the hiding-place, but I was caught. The Gestapo took me to a train; where the train was going I didn't know. I knew only that this was the end, so I took a chance and jumped out of a window in the toilet of the speeding train.

When I regained consciousness I was in a French hospital with a broken spine. The Gestapo apparently found my trail and came to the hospital after me. The doctors, however, insisted that according to French law they must wait until the patient recovers. A few days later several armed men came to the hospital, whisked me out of there and brought me to a base of the French underground.

After liberation I rejoined my wife and children.

IN BELGIUM

by Joshua Krantz

I came to Belgium in 1930. Other Szydlowiecers there were Chaim Mandelbaum, Israel Yehiel Glatt, Mordecai Fishman, Cooperschmidt. When the Germans invaded the country we all

ran to France, but they got there ahead of us and we had no choice but to return to Belgium.

Until the end of 1941 the Germans didn't bother us, but then came the decrees. In July 1942 they rounded up all the Szydlowiecers and sent us to Malin, near Antwerp. Then they sent me to a labor camp at Dan, not far from Boulogne in France. Toward the end of September 1942 a group of high S.S. officers came to Dan. Some of them handed out sugar; other, beating. From some of the young Jewish women who came with them I learned that they were there to select people for Auschwitz.

The next day there was a rollcall. One German, a civilian, spoke to us very politely, like a father to his child. I know how you must feel, he said. You have family, children. I have children myself. But I want you to know: you are all going home. You'll work a few weeks for the Germans and that will be the end of it.

Some of us started weeping for joy, that's how sweetly he talked. But I already knew that we were going to Auschwitz, so while the train was speeding toward Malin, I jumped off.

And that's how I was saved.

LAST DEPORTATION FROM SZYDLOVIEC

by Max Ostro

In December 1942 the Germans announced that they were setting up four new ghettos. Szydlowiec was one of them. It was a trick to get all the Jews who had been hiding — in the forest, in bunkers, even in labor camps — to come back to Szydlowiec. This diabolical trap worked. Thousands of Jews streamed into the ghetto from all directions. Many Szydlowiecers came from the liquidated camp at Lipowa Pola; it had cost a lot of money to get into that camp because it was a safer place.

My dear parents were there and they too returned to the “new ghetto” in Szydlowiec. (The president of the Judenrat there was Shmuel Weisbrot.)

The news reached me and my brothers Hananiah-Aaron and Yehezkel-Binyomin in the camp at Zeork. (This camp was called “Streicher” after a big plant there that installed electrical networks all over Poland. In that camp the Germans shot my friend David Adler because he had an injured leg — they did it out of pity for him, they said. There were other Szydlowiecers with us, including Chaim Greenberg and Moshe Zisman (who were later sent to Auschwitz). From Zeork they also sent people to Hasag — among them Avromele Dimant, and Shlome Goldtreger, J. Futerman and others.

When we discovered that our parents were back in Szydlowiec, my brothers and I ran away from the camp and somehow got to Szydlowiec safely. But the place was no longer recognizable. The houses had no doors or windows. And here we had to live in the middle of winter, without heat. But being together with our beloved parents was enough. The only one missing was our sister Rochtshe, who lived in Ostrowca with her husband and two children. They all perished in Treblinka.

The reunion with our parents was a joyful one, but mixed with sorrow, because we could already sense what awaited us. In comparison with others, my parents did not look so bad. My brothers and I found a place to live with my friend Yankele Steinman, in Chaim Goldberg’s tannery. With us were also Moshe Briks, Moshe Milstein and Pinchas Steinman.

Hanukah was approaching and hunger prevented us from thinking very much about the holiday, but we did manage to find some candles and we waited for a miracle — maybe God would take pity on the remnant of Jews that had survived.

In the meantime, my father taught us what to do if we were deported. Since there would be little opportunity to leave the line during the march to the station, the only way left was

to get into the trains and try to jump off. He taught us how to leap from a speeding train — we must never jump in the direction the train was coming from, but always in the direction in which it was going.

During Hanukah the Nazis surrounded the ghetto with so many armed guards that it was impossible to get out. It happened suddenly. Our food supply was cut off. This situation lasted until January 13, 1943. On the 12th the commandos that carried out the deportation — most of them were Ukrainians — came into the ghetto and demanded all the valuables that we still had in our possession. This was a sign that the final "action" was about to begin.

That night no one slept, and no miracles happened. The murderers proceeded with their diabolical plan. The cattle cars were already waiting at the railroad station. The heart-rending scenes we witnessed that night cannot be described in words.

On the 13th, early in the morning, the hated order came: "Alle raus!" They lined us up in rows of five. The S.S. waited for the Ukrainian guards, but they were very busy beating the tormented Jews with clubs and rifle-butts. They selected the stronger among us to stay behind and clean up the town.

One of them was my brother Yehezkel-Binyomin. The rest of us marched to the station. Anyone who could not stay in line was shot. There were many victims that day.

In the crush, our family tried at least to get into the same car. I looked at the little windows in the sides of the train. They were all blocked with barbed wire. The afternoon grew late and the men started the mincha prayers.

Then my father appealed to all those in the train: "Let us dawn this last maariv (evening prayers) with utmost devotion. We all know that the murderers want to destroy us. So let us pray to God for mercy." Everyone — men and women alike — wept so inconsolably that it should have split all the heavens.

After the prayers, everyone said the kaddish. It seemed that each person was reciting it for himself. The train became a grave on wheels as everyone said the last confession.

Then my father spoke to us privately and warned us that not a moment more should be lost, that we must now try to escape through the windows. One man hacked away at the barbed wire of one of the windows until it was clear. The train was still speeding along the tracks. We said farewell to Mother and Father. I shall never forget that moment. Father stood at the window directing the escape. We were — I, my brother Hananiah and Yehezkel Gzembo (Shmuel Tsalel's son).

The first to jump was Hananiah. Second was Yehezkel. Third was me. I jumped and fell into a snowbank. I jumped to life. But my brother and Yehezkel jumped to death.

I lay in the snow with a high fever and fell asleep. I was awakened by a Polish policeman who happened to be the son-in-law of a Szydlowiec named Zaremba, who owned a haberdashery shop. The policeman told me that I was not far from the camp at Pionek, near Radom, and that there were Jews there.

He took me to a village jail to spend the night. In the morning he came to see me and I wrote a note to a Pole in Szydlowiec with whom my parents had left all our money. My father trusted him implicitly — his name was Czczakowski.

He owned a nail factory and was an honest Christian. In my note I instructed him to give the Polish policeman 5000 zloty.

It was worth it. The policeman took me to the camp at Pionek, where there was a munitions factory called Wytwornia Prochu W Pionkach. He introduced me to the camp boss as a mechanic who wanted to work.

In this camp we had enough to eat. I was able to do the work and it was not hard. This situation lasted until Tisha B'Av 1944, when the camp was liquidated and all the Jews

were evacuated to Auschwitz. On the way I found a chance to escape and wandered in the forest all alone until I came to a village where I happened to meet a friendly peasant. His name was Jagetz Wensdznieski. He made a hiding-place in a ditch that looked like a grave. Every day he would bring me food, but I would not have lasted there very long. Fortunately, the Russians came into the village and liberated me.

After the liberation I went back to our house in Szydlowiec with Moshe Eisenberg and Akiba Liberman. However, on account of the cruel behavior of the Poles we left very soon. Akiba was later killed in the Kielce pogrom.

My parents and my two brothers perished.

THE FIRST LABOR CAMPS

by Isaiah Henig

In the summer of 1940 the Germans put up large posters ordering Jewish men to report to the newly built nail factory outside the city. This factory had a high fence around it. They were going to select a small number of young men to work in a labor camp for a short time. Everyone had to report in the factory yard, where there would be doctors to okay only the strongest. In families where there was no father, or where the parents were elderly, the oldest son would not be taken. Anyone who did not report would go to prison for ten years.

The smarter fellows did not report. They merely hid for a day, and nothing happened. Israel Milstein and I had special certificates from the Judenrat, so we were certain that the Germans wouldn't take us. But when we came to the nail factory we saw that we were in trouble. There were no doctors and the Germans laughed at our Judenrat "documents."

Once there, we couldn't get out. About 500 people had reported Ukrainian guards, with a few Germans in command,

lined us up in rows of five and marched us to the railroad station.

Before we left the factory they warned us that if one of us ran away they would shoot ten others. They said that they had counted us and knew exactly how many of us there were.

We rode in trucks to Pulawy and from there to Juzefow, where they divided us into two groups. One group went to the labor camp there, the other group was put into a closed courtyard. Again they warned us: if one man ran away they would shoot ten others. In this place they gave us some soup.

Next to the yard were two Jewish homes. While I was eating the soup, one of our prisoners, accompanied by a young woman from one of the houses, came over to me. She told us she could hide two people. I explained that I couldn't endanger the lives of ten of my friends. She told us that she had already done this a few times, that the guards count the men but they really don't have an accurate count.

I didn't go with her, but the other Szydlowiec did. He stayed in the house overnight and the next day he was safely back in Szydlowiec. The young woman was right. The Ukrainians counted us a few times, but they really didn't know what the total was. And they didn't shoot anybody.

One night a caravan of thirty peasant wagons brought us to the camp at Janiczew. All the Szydlowiecs were put into one barracks. Early the next day morning the camp commandant lined us up for rollcall. He counted us and then divided us into groups of twenty. The twentieth man was appointed group leader. Israel and I were in the same group, of which I was made leader.

The first day they didn't give us any work to do, so we took a good look around. There were three or four barracks in the camp; some people had already been there a long time. The Szydlowiecs kept talking about how to get out of there and go home.

The next day they put us to work building a dam to regulate the water in the Vistula. We dragged wheelbarrows full of earth down to the river. The higher the dam grew, the steeper the ground on which we had to drag the loaded wheelbarrows. When we got back to the camp I couldn't stand up.

Israel and I resolved to get out of there. We had noticed a man and woman going in and out of the camp whenever they pleased.

Why couldn't we do the same?

After work the next day the two of us hung around outside the commandant's barracks. Israel was holding in his hand a fancy box with a beautiful razor. After a while the commandant came out and asked us: "what do you have there?" Israel opened it and showed him what was inside. I handed it to him and we walked away. The following day we went back to the commandant and asked him for permission to leave the camp for a few hours. He didn't give us a pass, but took us over to the guards and told them that we could go and come whenever we wished.

The town of Janiczew was on the other side of the Vistula. Every hour there was a primitive little boat that ferried passengers and freight across the river. We paid half a zloty a person and in a little while we were in Janiczew. The Judenrat there made us welcome and told us that if we brought the camp commandant to them they might be able to do something for us. They needed a favor from him. Some time ago the Germans had rounded up their young men and taken them to a camp very far away. Maybe they could persuade him to have them moved to his camp.

When we returned to the camp we told the commandant that the Judenrat in Janiczew had found a good tailor for him and would he please come see them. He said he would go there

with us right away. In Janiczew we left him with the president of the Judenrat. What the president told him, I don't know, but in a little while we saw them both walking over to the tailor and they seemed to be having an amicable conversation. Israel and I went back to the camp.

The commandant's relationship with the Janiczew Judenrat helped us a great deal. Every day a few people left the camp, went into town and returned in the evening.

There were a few Szydlowiecs in the camp who were too ill or too weak to work. The commandant sent them to another camp, but they had to work there. Isaiah Mendl Eisenberg, one of this group, could not walk as quickly as the others. The Ukrainian guard who was leading them shot him on the road.

The Szydlowiec Judenrat sent a gift to the commandant — enough leather for a pair of boots. A similar gift came from the Janiczew camp, where the other half of the Szydlowiecs were interned. This further eased the situation in our camp. Anyone who had a little money went to see the commandant. For a small sum he would let people go free. My cousin Itche Brandmesser paid a small amount and was released the same day as Israel and I.

Many who had no money simply went out to work and did not return at the end of the day. Most of them got to Szydlowiec safely.

This situation did not last long, however. The Gestapo in Lublin soon recalled our lenient commandant and sent a Folksdeutsch in his place. The new commandant was a murderer.

Conditions in the camp grew very bad. When a few Szydlowiecs tried to escape, two of them were shot and a third wounded. (The latter was brought to Szydlowiec by his sister-in-law and survived.)

Members of the Szydlowiec Judenrat went to Lublin. With

the help of the Judenrat there, plus a considerable sum of money, they succeeded in having all the Szydlowiec's in both camps sent home, as well as the six sick men who had been sent to a third camp.

From Shidlovtse to Dachau

by Dora Blander-Rosencweig

This was ten days after Tisha B'Av, 1942. We were expecting a roundup of young women to be sent to Skarzysko. The S.S., with the help of the Jewish police, went from house to house with a list. I was in bed with a high fever that day, but they ordered me to get dressed and go with them. My parents' pleas were to no avail. I cannot find the words to describe the farewell scene between me and my father Abraham Hirsh and my mother Esther.

The police took us to the city hall. This particular roundup included only young women and girls. The place was already full of people waiting to see what would happen next. We did not know whether we would ever see our homes and parents again. We were locked up until Monday. Then a truck came and took us to the Hasag camp at Skarzysko, where they assigned us to various jobs. I was assigned to a machine which a Pole taught me to operate. This machine packed the explosive into bullets. The work itself was tolerable, but the conditions were inhuman. After a hard day's work they gave us a little bit of soup. Every evening the factory guards inspected us to see that no one took any bullets out of the factory. That was supposedly the purpose of the inspection, but if the guards liked a particular woman they would detain her — and we never saw her again.

One day they took a Shidlovtse girl, Rachmele Eisenberg, out of line. Rachmele was tall and pretty. She and a few other

girls never came back. After that, many of the women purposely made themselves look as unattractive as possible. This helped.

My brother Menachem, rest his soul, worked in Plant C. There was no place to bathe there, so once a week they brought the men to our plant, which had a bath. When I saw Menachem the first time I didn't recognize him. He — and all the others who worked in Plant C — were yellow, from the chemicals that they were putting into the grenades. I was happy to see him, however, and I waited eagerly every week for the moment that we could see each other once more. It gave me a reason to live. I felt that I was not all alone in the world.

I made friends there with Bella Rudmanowicz (now Bella Almelech, who lives in Los Angeles). She and I were together in all camps up until liberation. The work kept getting more and more difficult. In the camp each day dragged like a year, but somehow we lived to see the summer on 1944, when the Germans began evacuating the people there closer to the German border, near Czenstochow. Here we stayed until December 15, 1944, then they dragged us by train for two weeks to Ravensbruck in Germany, a large concentration camp with a million women of various nationalities. Here our work consisted of carrying wood to the crematoria. Whenever there was a selection they took only Jews and Gypsies, not other nationalities.

One night they surrounded the barracks of the Gypsies. The resulting panic was so great that they gassed them all. Not one was let alive. They tried to "pacify" us by warning us that we were next. Luckily it didn't come to that; the next day they started marching us away from there further and further into the hinterland until we finally came to Dachau. Two days later, April 22, 1944, we were liberated by the American army and taken by truck to the D.P. camp at Feldafing. Here my brother Menachem came for me from Switzerland. In America he passed away.

Shidlovtse In 1980

by Isaac Milstein

I consider April 30th to be my second birthday, because on that day in 1944 I and hundreds of other Jews were in a Tyrolean village expecting to be shot by the S.S., but at the last moment, the U.S. army came and liberated us.

Ever since that day it has been my greatest wish to see Shidlovtse again, but it wasn't until May 1980 that my dream was realized. A friend of mine recommended a Polish driver in Warsaw who would take me wherever I wanted to go. This driver was a big help to me as soon as I arrived in Warsaw. His mother, a writer, was a Jewish woman who had converted. She was working on a book about the Holocaust, so she jumped at the opportunity to make the trip with us to Shidlovtse.

When she asked me the purpose of my visit, I told her that first, I wanted to see my hometown, that maybe I'd find someone from my family there; second, I wanted to meet a former Polish schoolmate who had helped to catch Jews in return for a kilo of sugar and who stopped me one day and robbed me everything I had.

After driving through various towns and villages we finally came to Shidlovtse. Almost everything there has been rebuilt; there is practically no trace of Jews ever having lived there. The old homes of the Blanders, Schreiberbergs, Silbermans, are gone, and on the place where the Frischmans, Rosenbaums and Steinmans used to live, there is now a big, four-story building. In the fishmarket there are still a few of the old houses — Aaron Blumenfeld's, Shmuel Brandmesser's, Mendelsohn's, Lederman's Guterman's. From Ella Dimant's to the city hall, all the houses are still there. Our house, as well as all the houses from Rinek-2 to Platkota's Garden, have disappeared and in their place is a large building.

I stood there and to me it seemed like the grave of my

whole family. From this house my parents were deported, along with other Jews, to the umschlagplatz, including my older sister and her five children; the youngest, two years old, my 75-year-old Grandmother Gitl carried in her arms five kilometers to the railroad station, in the company of her own children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren.

The driver's mother asked a Polish passerby if there were any Jews still living in Shidlovtse, and if he missed the Jews. He replied: "It's much nicer here without the *zhids* than with them. We couldn't wait to be rid of them."

An employee in the city hall took me to the Jewish cemetery. The entrance stood open. I asked him to put up a gate that could be locked, that he could hold the keys and open the gate for tourists, and that he could earn a little money from this. He agreed to do so. The Polish government has put a monument at the cemetery to the Jews of Shidlovtse who were killed in the years 1939-1945. The marble gravestones have been vandalized. My brother Israel's grave has no headstone because he was shot by the Germans shortly before the last deportation.

A pole told us that there were two Jews still living in Shidlovtse. They do not live openly as Jews, but everyone knows who they are.

One day we traveled to Treblinka, the cemetery of hundreds of thousands of Jews, including my family. Only the railroad tracks remain of the camp. The gas chambers and crematoria were destroyed. The Poles have set up a kind of museum here with many stones, each stone symbolizing a town. On one of these stones is the inscription: SZYDLOWIEC.

My last wish was to see the Christian woman who saved my two cousins; they were then young children. She lives in the village of Krzenczyn. Her husband worked for my father as a fisherman. This fisherman was also a big thief, and during the war the Germans sent him to Auschwitz, where he perished.

But it was through this Polish thief that my young cousins were saved. He left a will containing a warning: if anything happened to the two Jewish children, Partisans would burn down the whole village. This threat worked; the children were saved.

Unfortunately, when we got there, his wife was not at home and I had to leave for the United States that same day. As far as I know, she is still living in that town.

A JOURNEY WITHOUT END

by Michael Pomeranz

After attending the International Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and Their Children, held in Washington, D.C. in 1983, I became obsessed with going to Poland — to see what I could see — to feel what I could feel. I ended up going in 1984 and again in 1986. What I saw and felt was beyond my wildest expectations. The emotion that it stirred in me and continues to stir in me goes well beyond words. What happened during those dark years of 1939-1945 must not be forgotten.

On my first visit to Szydlowiec, with the aid of a guide and maps drawn by Jack Milstein and my father, I was able to find Platz Wilnosci (Liberty Square — how ironic). What was one a square, known as the Straw Market, is still a square, but with grass and some play items for children. On the corner where my father's house once stood, is now a five story apartment building with some shops. I had mixed feelings about the house being gone. On the one hand, I so dearly wanted to see it; and on the other hand, the thought of seeing it and seeing someone else walk out of it would be painful.

My First visit in 1984 to the cemetery was one of mixed emotions. As I looked at the rows and rows of headstones, I was extremely saddened that here lied people, Jews, maybe even

my own grandparents, where because of the immense pain hardly anyone comes to pay respect. I thought of how in a period of over forty years that virtually no one had come to lie a rock down on the headstone of a loved one. I knew I would return. And in 1986, I did. I had two specific reasons for going back so soon. I had to go into the cemetery to find my great grandfather's headstone. And second, to try to locate the Skwarek sisters, who had lived next door to my father and whom I understood might still be alive. They were rare exception of non-Jews living in Poland who helped Jews.

I was checking row by row, stone by stone, for my great grandfather's grave. As I was about a third of the way down the path, I for the first time consciously looked at a headstone. I was frozen — it read: Fischel Levin in Yiddish. It was my great grandfather's grave.

Prior to going to the trip, my father had given me a piece of paper, written in Hebrew. The cemetery was half destroyed and/or its headstones obliterated.

After the shock and a few moments, I walked to the monument, in the center of the cemetery. It was explained to me that it was a memorial to the approximate 14,000 Jews who had been murdered by the Nazis in that area. I took out a large multi-wick Yahrzeit candle and lit it. I recited from memory only the first line of Kaddish as that was all I could remember. The holy words of the whole Kaddish were not spoken but my deep prayers to their souls and to G-d were there.

I walked back to my grandfather's headstone, placed a rock on it, lit the candle, and prayed. I continued to walk around the cemetery. As I walked about the cemetery, young children did so as well, taking a short cut home from school. Some walked straight through and still others were curious at my presence there and they loitered nearby or hid behind headstones peeking out from time to time to see what this man with a yarmulka on was doing. I wondered, what did they know

of where they lived. When they arrived home surely they would tell their parents of their experience in the old Jewish cemetery. Their parents would have to tell them something. I wondered what it would be. I can't help but think that someday one of these children will have been positively and deeply affected by what he saw and what he possibly learned that day.

In 1984 I went to the Castle. I crossed over the moat, again into another world within another world and entered into the center courtyard. If these walls could talk, if these walls could only talk. It was here that hundreds upon hundreds of Jews — women, children, the old, the stricken — were kept for days without water before their ultimate transport and death at Treblinka. Beyond the courtyard, the inside of the castle had been converted into a museum for musical instruments. Yet, no instrument could drown out the anguish, the screams, and the whimpering of young children years ago.

In 1984 I continued traveling through the town, taking pictures of old buildings, thinking perhaps that they were pre-Holocaust and that my father would be able to recognize them later. At the time I took them I simply knew that they were old buildings; and what significance they had I knew not. When my father saw the pictures there were two he especially identified Pinkert's house and Eisenberg's factory and shtibel. When I returned in 1986 I studied these buildings with great intensity, having learned their significance since my last trip.

In 1984 I visited Treblinka. The site consisted of a series of stone monuments. First there were large rectangular blocks, lined up in a long column. This represented the railroad ties (tracks) that led to the "ramp". Then there were about a dozen irregularly shaped stones approximately fifteen feet tall with each one having the name of a country inscribed on it; countries where Jews had come from who were killed here.

Then as I entered the main grounds. I saw a huge stone monument approximately thirty feet tall on top of which was sculptured a Menorah and people suffering. There was also a stone plaque stating, "Never Again" in several languages; and then there was the most moving of all — thousands of rocks ranging in height from one and half to four feet, each one representing a city, town or shtetel from where jews had come to meet their final destiny. As I wandered there was a great part of me that could not imagine a stone with "Szydlowiec" inscribed on it. Suddenly, I burst into uncontrollable tears. There it was — "Szydlowiec". It would be impossible to say which came first, the viewing or the weeping. The rock stood about two and a half feet tall and unlike the others there was a large weed growing at its base. As I stood and wept, I realized that this was the headstone of my family. I did not have a Yahrzeit candle with me. So I went into the nearby woods, broke off some downed twigs, practiced making as best as possible, a Mogen David. Finally I had it. I returned to the stone and reconstructed on top of it that which had long been the symbol of our life and forty years ago, our death. As I looked upon it I felt proud. As I had gathered up the twigs, I had noticed discarded empty Yohrzeit holders. I thought perhaps I could find one that still had wax in it. After frantically looking for several minutes, I came across one that had been barely used. The camp was deserted except for three or four people, none of whom had matches. I got into my car, drove several miles until I found a local Pole who had some matches. I hurried back, lit the candle and prayed. Sadness — yes, beyond any expectation. Proud — yes, of them of course — they were my family, they were Jews, they died because they were Jews. If they perished with the Shema on their lips, I do not know. It does not matter. What matters now, is that their memory stay alive.

In 1984, I went to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The name

Auschwitz is actually a misnomer for it was at Birkenau that millions perished. It was here that the many barracks existed as well as the large crematoriums. Whenever reference is made to Auschwitz it is really referring to Birkenau, located about three kilometers away. As I entered the information building at Auschwitz, one woman informed me that she worked there. I told her that my father had been here. She said: "Come with me, I'll give you a tour." She brought me over to the Archives section and searched through various records — many Pomeranz's but not A19514. When I gave the woman my father's number she produced a book that was sort of like a camp log and in there we were able to find my father's number in a sequence of others, which indicated the day he arrived in the camp, from where, how many women, men, children, were on his transport. I also learned from this book that my father had been on the last train transport out of Auschwitz on January 17th, 1945. The next day there was a death march of 65,000 people — 10,000 of which survived. The camp was liberated on January 26, 1945.

The next day I returned to Birkenau. As I drew close to the camp I kept focusing on the entrance building and the tracks leading down the center. Before entering I drove the length and width. I was amazed by its enormity — about a kilometer square. Finally, I walked through the entrance on the tracks, the same tracks where millions of Jews met their final destiny. I continued to walk alongside the tracks until I reached the spot where the selection took place — where good and evil met — where the epitome of innocence — young children met the epitome of evil — Joseph Mengele — the most evil being the world has ever known. I continued onward until I reached barrack number 29 or what was left of it. Actually what was left of it will always remain, for this was my father's "home". What took place in there, to my father and to everyone else, I will not attempt with words. I don't think anyone can, let alone

me. I removed a chunk of brick from the smokestack and broke off a short segment of barged wire nearby, put them in my coat pocket.

After two days of investigating/searching, talking with non-Jews who had always lived in Szydlowiec and relying on information ten years old, I found myself at the front door of Tybla 6 in Radom, with a bouquet of flowers in one hand. My other hand was clenched as I prepared to knock at the door I hoped would be the home of Ruzka Skwarek. I was excited, optimistic, and curious as to her reaction and possible shock. After all a descendant of Jews from Szydlowiec she could not have ever expected to have seen. I knocked, the door creaked open and an older woman appeared. My driver and she began speaking in Polish. I recognized four words; the last of which convinced me that not only had I found the right person, but I had actually found a Pole with a heart for Jews. During the conversation my driver mentioned Szydlowiec and the woman responded, "Tag" (yes). A moment later my driver said, "Pomeranz". Ruzka looked at me with both amazement and warmth and without any hesitation began affectionately repeating, "Yankele, Yankele, Yankele". The few seconds that I was speechless could be marked on a calendar. I gave Ruzka a small picture of my father in his thirties which she cupped in both her hands, fearful as if the image was like water and might possibly be lost if not held carefully. I too did not want anything lost, so I pulled out my tape recorder. She asked me how my family was now. But I wanted to know how my family was then. Without even asking I was told of the piety of my grandparents. Ruzka reflected back in time as if it were yesterday, with beautiful thoughts of my father and my Aunt Esther. As time went on, my questions went deeper and deeper. "What is it like here without Jews?", I asked. As my questions began to center around these issues, the responses through the translation became less clear. I found out

later that my interpreter began suspecting my motive for being there and was adjusting the questions and answers as he saw fit. He later confessed to me that he thought perhaps I was some kind of agent. But dialogue is not the only means of communication, for when I was alone with Ruzka (having sent my driver to get my camera), she leaned over, hugged me, and said some soft words in Polish as her eyes filled with water. While there I learned that her sister, Sabina, was in the next room but was too ill to see me — I sensed that she must have been on her death bed. This sister is the woman who gave refuge to my Aunt Esther when she returned home to Szydlowiec and was faced with threats of death from the local Poles. Both women have died since that event; my aunt twenty five years ago and Sabina last year.

I have not yet marched from Platz Wolnosci to the train station. Those steps taken by my grandparents, aunts, cousins and the Jews of Szydlowiec forty six years ago, will be retraced in the year 5748 (1988), G-d willing. Perhaps some of you reading this will join me. As I sit here thinking about that walk, I realize that I do not know what my feelings will be. Will I cry? I do not know. Perhaps I will sing. If I do, what word shall flow from my lips? I do not know. Will it be Hatikvah, Ani Maamin, or Sholom Aleichem? I do not know. What I do know is the following: I will walk tall, erect, and most of all, proud. I also know that I will not be alone. Along with me, there will be at least fourteen thousand souls, but more than likely there will be six million, including one and half million children. All of them will be whispering in my ear and only then will I know what I feel and what my response to those feelings will be. My past merges into my present and then beyond. The past provides me with the directions I am to follow.

In the year 2448 from Creation Mount Sinai quaked and smoked and the Children of Israel trembled. The "Revelation" took place. We had all answered together that we accepted the Torah.

In the years 5702-5705 (1942-1945) there was smoke again. This time it was rising from the chimneys; the ground beneath our parents' feet quaked and they trembled as the world stood by indifferent. Then, in the year 5741 (1981) at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, before G-d, we, the children of survivors, accepted "The Legacy".

Since Sinai, sfrom generation to generation, we, as Jews, have individually had to decide to what degree we would follow that which was given to us at Sinai. Now, once again, we as Jews and children of survivors, must ask ourselves to what degree we will follow "The Legacy". Our parents and other survivors are becoming fewer and fewer; much too soon all of them — all the witnesses — will be gone.

Elie Wiesel said: "If we cannot imagine the past, then we cannot imagine the future." He accurately points out that anyone who was not there, cannot imagine what really took place. Because of this, we as Jews and children of Holocaust survivors, must strive ever so hard, to remind the world to come as close as possible to imagining the past. For, if we don't, those dark years will become forgotten and distorted and mankind will be doomed!

LIFE IN SZYDLOWIEC DURING THE HOLOCAUST

(A SUMMARY)

by B. KAGAN

When the Germans occupied Szydlowiec in September, 1939, there were approximately 8,000 Jews in the "shtetl". Immediately, evil decrees began to rain upon the Jews; they were required to contribute huge sums of money, to surrender furs and jewelry, to sew blue Stars of David onto white bands. A curfew was imposed, commerce and crafts were forbidden, and above all, there were various types of forced labor in the city and in other locations. There was only one punishment for not obeying a command — execution by shooting.

In addition, all synagogues and Hasidic "shtiblech" were shut down. Praying collectively was also strictly forbidden. Nevertheless, Jews would risk the consequences and, particularly during the High Holy Days, assemble in Minyanim — quorums of ten men — to unburden their souls of their bitter troubles.

In order to lighten their task of coercion and annihilation, the Gestapo immediately appointed a "Judenrat," which was to direct the Jews of Szydlowiec and be responsible for all their activities. To decline such an "honor" was impossible. At the Judenrat there was established a Jewish "Arbeitsamt," a sanitation committee and a Jewish police force, which was responsible for enforcing all the orders of the Judenrat — which in reality meant the orders of the German authorities.

Szydlowiec was one of only a few Jewish communities in Poland where there was a so-called "open ghetto" — a ghetto that was not surrounded by barbed wire. This was an

exceptional advantage, because it made it easier for the Jews of Szydlowiec to come into contact with the countryside and to obtain food, in spite of the drastic punishments that were involved if they were captured. It happened more than once that Jews were shot to death if meat or butter was found hidden in their garments, if they were found baking bread, etc. But hunger often grew stronger than danger, and Jews risked their lives to support themselves and their families.

People had to care not only for their own families. Since Szydlowiec was an “open ghetto,” a fact that had many advantages, it attracted many Jews not only from surrounding areas, but even from distant cities such as Warsaw, Lodz, Cracow and others. There were approximately 8,000 Jews in the city at the outbreak of the war; at the time of the Holocaust, this amount grew to approximately 15,000. Many of the Jews who sought refuge in Szydlowiec were without means of support, and the local Jews had to provide them with food, shelter, etc. A large public kitchen was established, where many hundreds of meals were distributed each day.

Why did Szydlowiec merit being declared an “open ghetto”? This came about because the Jews in that city made up approximately 87 percent of the “shtetl” population, and therefore it was perhaps easier for the Germans to declare the entire “shtetl” a ghetto than to isolate the Jews in a restricted area.

An important factor — and indeed, perhaps the most important — in creating an “open ghetto” in Szydlowiec was not so much the “statistics” as something else: the relationship between the Judenrat and the various national and municipal offices in the “shtetl” and in the district. The members of the Judenrat attempted, during this period, to establish good relations not only with the local German authorities, but even

with the heads of the Gestapo in Radom, under whose jurisdiction Szydlowiec found itself. Thanks to that "relationship," which was, to be sure, not due to "love of Israel", many Jews were rescued from death, and in one occasion over 400 deported Jews in the Yanishov camp were even freed and sent back to Szydlowiec because of such "influence."

Because of this relationship between the Judenrat and the local German authorities, the situation in the Szydlowiec ghetto was much better than in most ghettos in Poland — better only in comparison, because here too many Jews were shot over the most trivial things. These "better conditions," however, lasted only until the end of 1941, when the boundaries of the ghetto were officially declared. Even then the area was not confined with barbed wire.

From that day on, the situation became increasingly worse, and soon the terrible day arrived: Wednesday, September 23, 1942. At six a.m., Jewish policemen and Christian firemen came into Jewish homes and announced the German command that exactly eight o'clock all Jews must assemble in the Strawmarket. It was permitted to bring along a parcel weighing 20 kilos. Whoever remained at home would be shot to death. Many Jews took refuge in pre-arranged hiding places, but the majority went to the Strawmarket.

This was the first deportation of the Jews of Szydlowiec. The promise of the Radom district-murderer Schipper that for 1,000 zlotos one could buy one's freedom, was a hoax. Those who gave 1,000 zlotos were separated from the mass of Jews and taken to the "Castle," where they were held without water for three days and then were taken to the trains. They all were sent directly to Treblinka. Other Jews tried to escape during the march to the railroad station, but they were shot.

There remained a work group of about 150 Jews and the Jewish police. They had to remove the Jewish corpses from the roads and houses and collect the Jewish belongings that had been left behind. The Jews who remained were concentrated in Pinkert's factory. Then all those who had been in hiding during the events of September 23 also arrived — a total of a few hundred Jews. On October 2, the SS took most of the Jews out of Pinkert's factory and sent them to Skarzhishk, where a few days later most of them fell into selection for Treblinka, together with the local Jews of Skarzhishk. This was the second deportation. There remained only some 70 Jews. Then several more Jews stole into this group.

On the eleventh day of November, 1942, the third deportation was carried out. It included the group of Jews that had worked at removing the Jewish corpses from the streets and collected Jewish belongings, and the Jewish police and their families. They too were deported to Skarzhishk camp.

In December 1942, the Germans officially proclaimed four "new ghettos," promising work and security in them. One of these "new" ghettos was Szydlowiec. The plan was just a diabolical trick to lure Jews from their hiding places with Christians and in the forests. Thousands of Jews, most of whom were not from Szydlowiec, once again allowed themselves to be misled — or acted out of great desperation — and came to the "new" ghetto. Many people from Szydlowiec even risked being shot to death and escaped from their camps and ran to the "new" ghetto. The number of Jews that flocked to the "new ghetto" reached some 5,000.

In the "new" ghetto there was even established a Judenrat. But the ghetto existed for only five or six weeks. On the thirteenth of January it was disbanded, and its nearly 5,000 Jews were deported to Treblinka. This was the fourth and last deportation. With this Szydlowiec became "Judenrein."

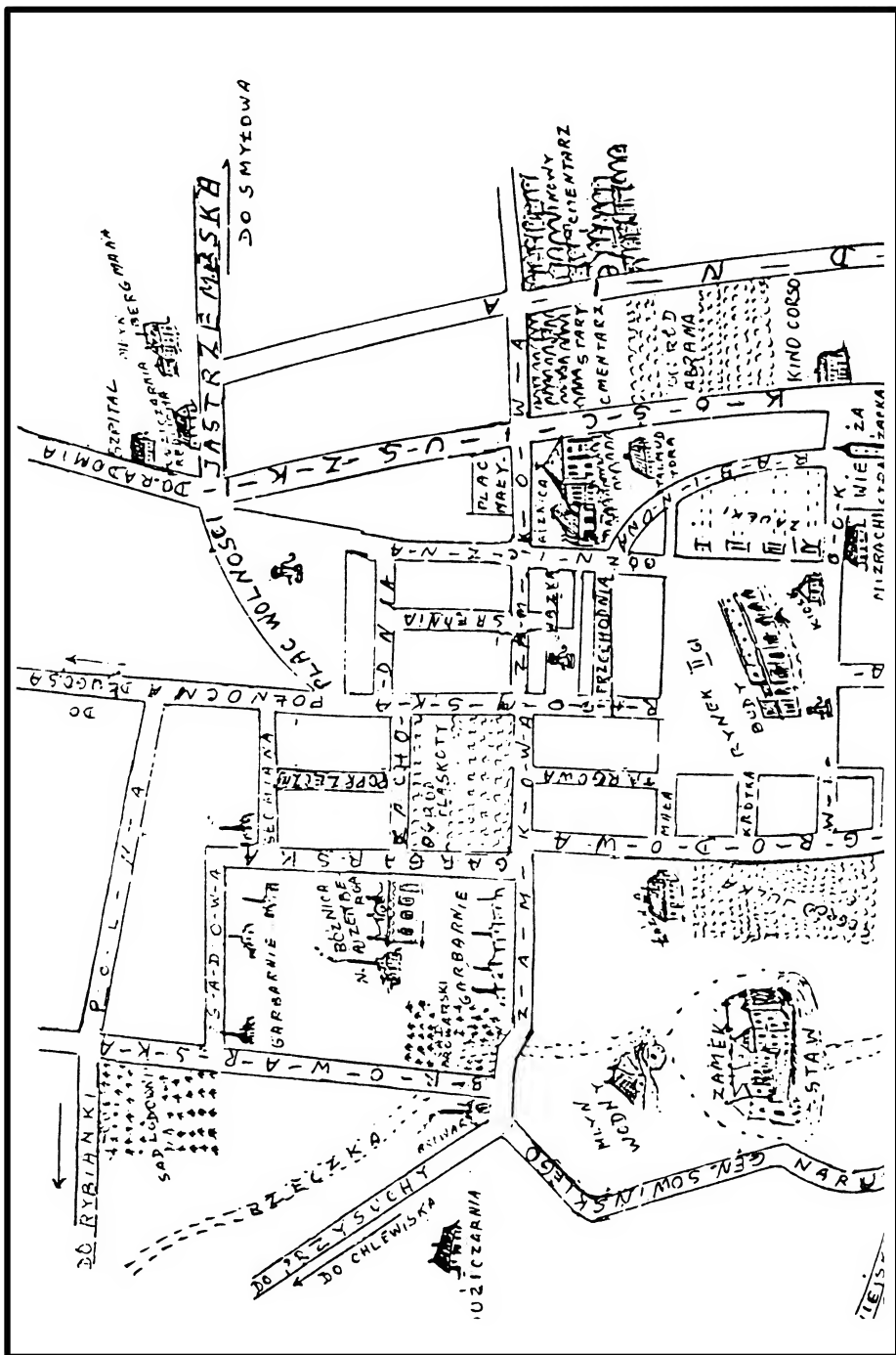
The main camp of the Jews of Szydłowiec was the Skarzhisk "Hasag." Many of the Szydłowiec Jews were shot to death there or perished of hunger and sickness. After the liquidation of "Hasag" in August of 1943, the Szydłowiec Jews were dispersed to various concentration camps, the majority to Dachau, Auschwitz, Bunchenwald, and Tereseinstadt.

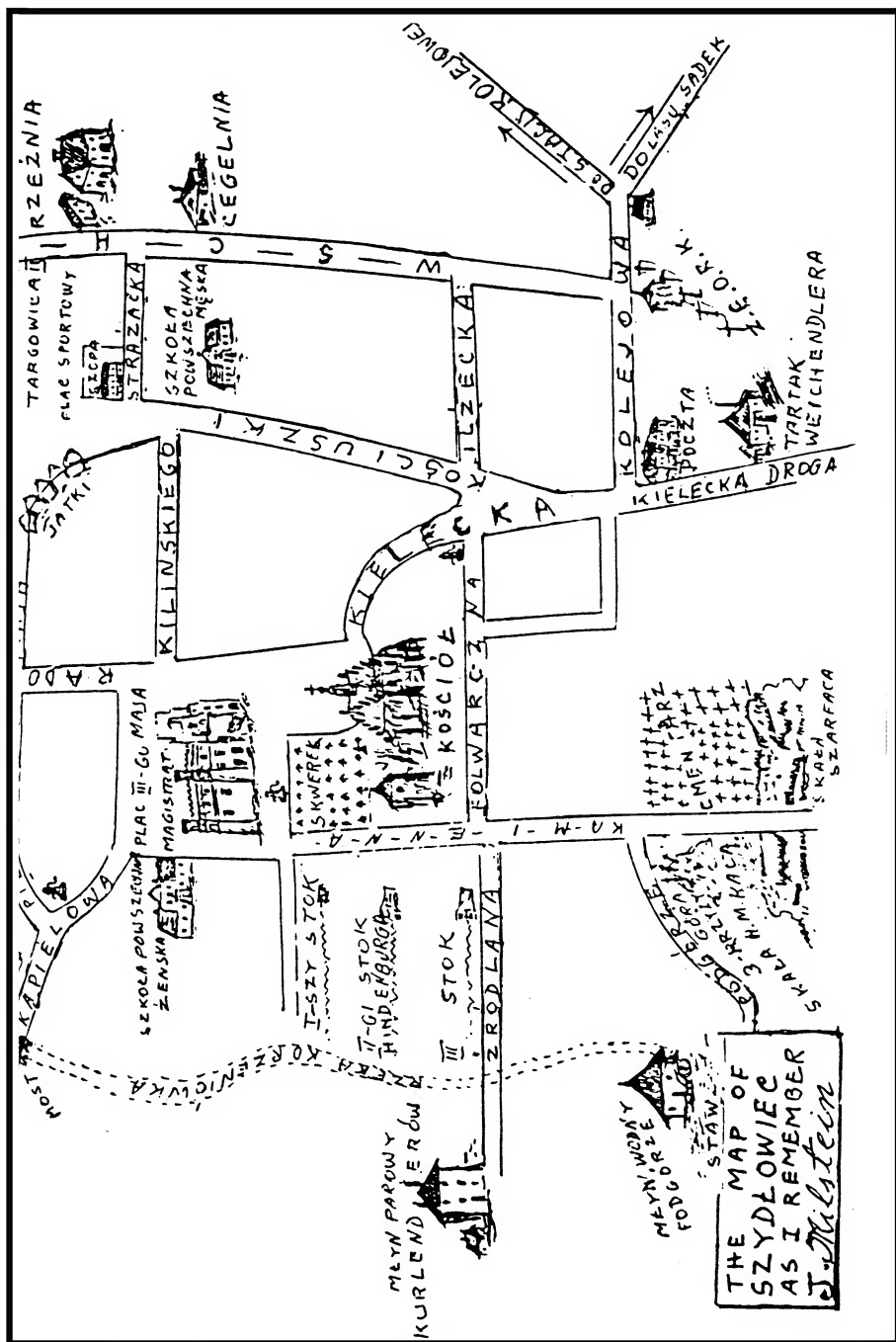
Here we could say a few words about the attitude of the local Christian population towards the Jews in the time of their great catastrophe. It is clear that *without* the Germans such a holocaust would not have taken place. But working *with* the Germans were very many local Christians, who *actively* helped to exterminate the Jews of Szydłowiec; they tortured them and shot them, or gave them over to Germans to be shot. The majority of the local Christians showed no compassion and rejoiced in the tragedy of the unfortunate Jews.

Out of this background of criminal collaboration with the Nazi murderers and open satisfaction with Jewish tragedy on the part of the neighboring Christians, we must set apart those instances in which Christians did help rescue Jews from death by giving them hiding places, at the risk of their own lives. One outstanding example is the Antoniaks, one of whom was imprisoned and the other executed for hiding two Jewish children.

The number of Szydłowiec Jews who remained alive out of all the hell-camps is approximately 300 — the remnants of a deeply-rooted Jewish community that had endured for over 400 years.

SZYDŁOWIEC IN PICTURES







Magistrat



Scene on the Market in 1914



Scene on the Market in 1914



The Bodens



A Group of Shildovster Chalutsim



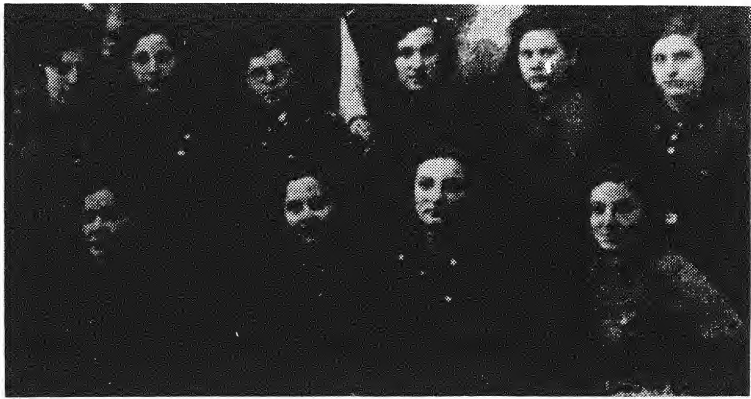
Group of Zionists



Poale-Zion Left



First Youth group of "Bund"



Girls of "Betar"



Betar



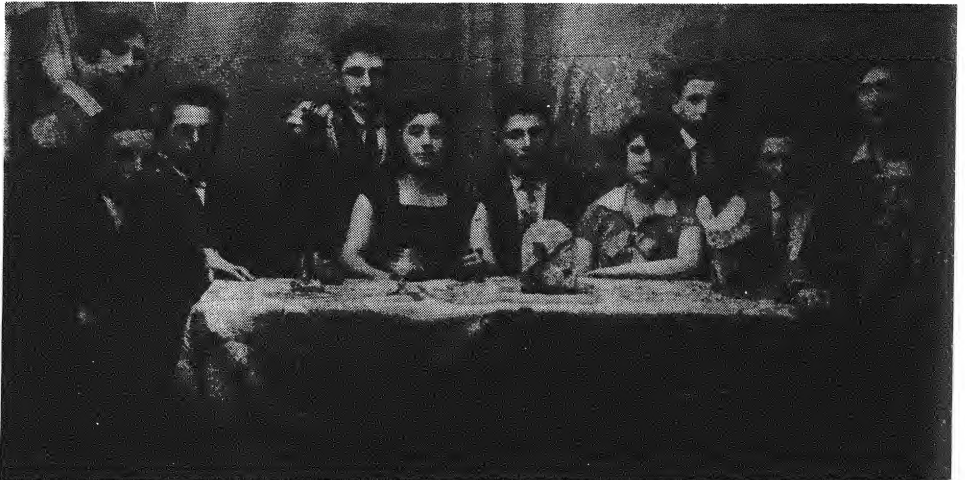
Youth of Mizrahi



A Group of young Zionists



Culture Club



Dramatic Circle



Culture Circle of "Tarbut"



Children of "Yavne" School



Jewish children of the Polish school



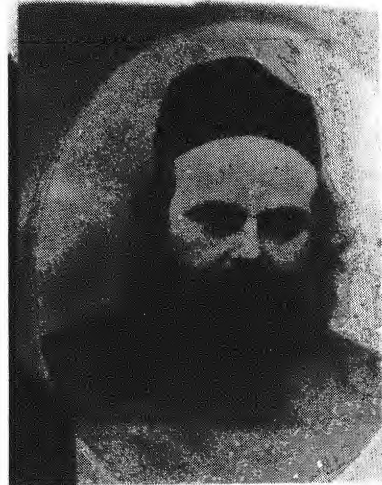
Hapoel Hamizrachi



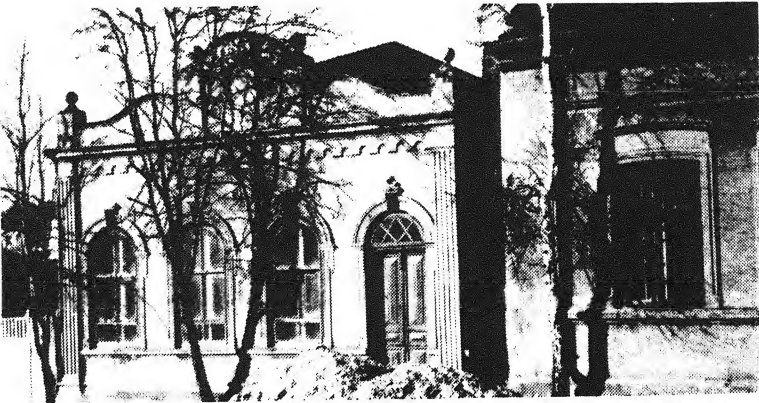
Yavne School



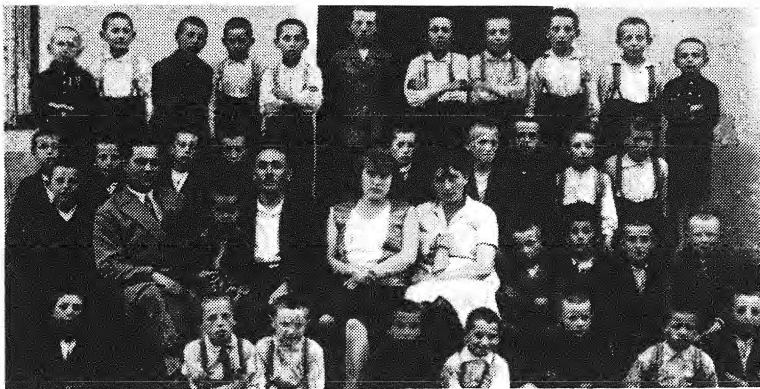
Jewish pupils in a Polish class



1. Rabbi Nosn David Rabinowitz - right
2. Rabbi Chaim Rabinowitz - left



The Shul of Note Eisenberg



Jewish pupils in a Polish class



A group of Shidlovtsers girls



Tailor Workshop



A Shoemaker Shop in Szydłowice



Shoemaker Workshop



Workshop of Women tailors



Shidlovtser with their Chaver Moshe Handsheer in America



**Purim-Shpiler in Szydlowiec 1937
H. Flacbaum, M. Szwiecznik, M. Dymant,
A. Milstein, A. Tenenbaum**



The Castle, the main deportation place.



The Castle
The Jews are driven to the Deportation



The Jewish cemetery after the deportation



A Street after the destruction



**The final place where
all the Shidlovtsers were
deported from to Treblinka.**



The Eastern Wall of the Shul



Shidlovtser in Camp Yanishev, 1940



Snatched Jews driven to their death



The Judenrat



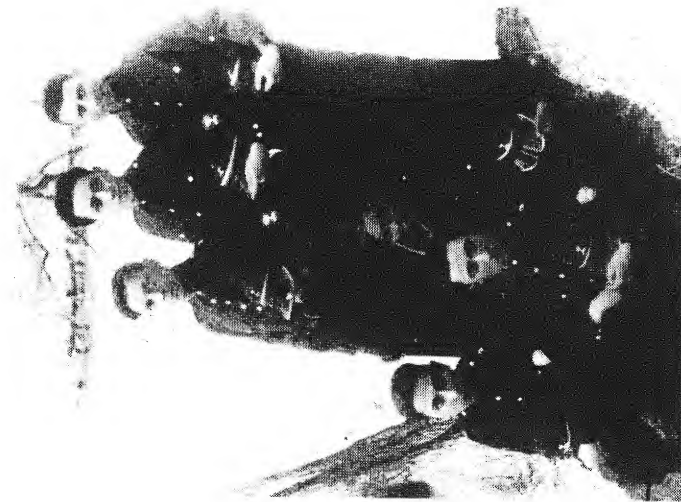
**David Szczenszliwy killed in Hasag
Work C. when he tried
to kill his murderer.**



**Died on the gallows
in Skarzysk**



Shidlovtsi Monument in Treblinka



Akiva Liberbaum sitting left, was killed in the Kielcer pogrom, 1945



The gate of the new Cemetery



**Monument in the Jewish cemetery,
erected by the Poles in 1949**



**A group of liberated Shidlovtser of the
Concentration Camp in Peking**



Shidlovtser in a French Camp



**The first Wedding of a Shidlovtsar
after the Liberation, Munchen, 1947.
the Bride Esther Pomeranz.**



A Shidlovster Yiskor-meeting on the cemetery in Tel Aviv in 1984



Shidlovtser in Israel



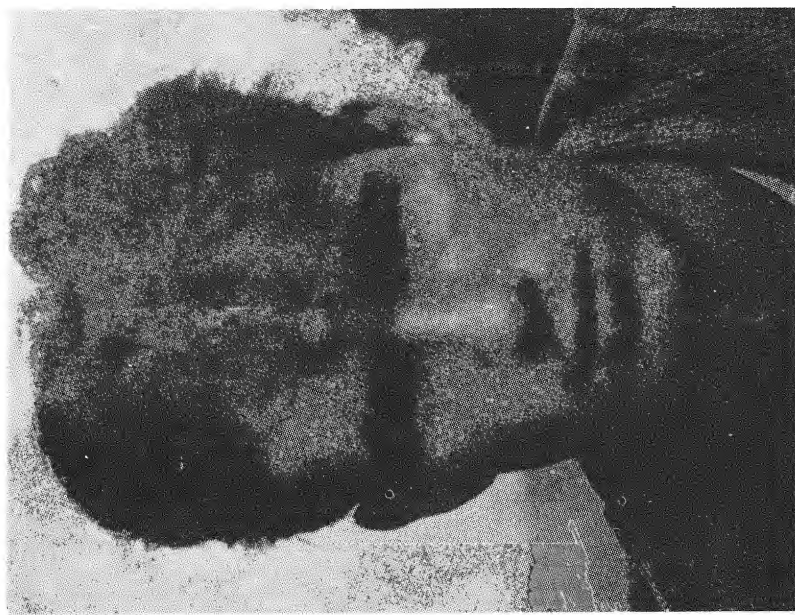
Executive Committee of the Shidlovtser in Israel



Committee of the Shidlovtsers Organization in Israel, in
Center Yitzhak Moro.



Memorial Temple in Israel for the Shidlovster Martyrs



**Shidlovtsi Monument in Israel, erected by the Shidlovtsi
Landsleit**

**Fallen Shidlovtsi in the 6-day war of Israel in 1967
Zalman Yitshaki Laks**



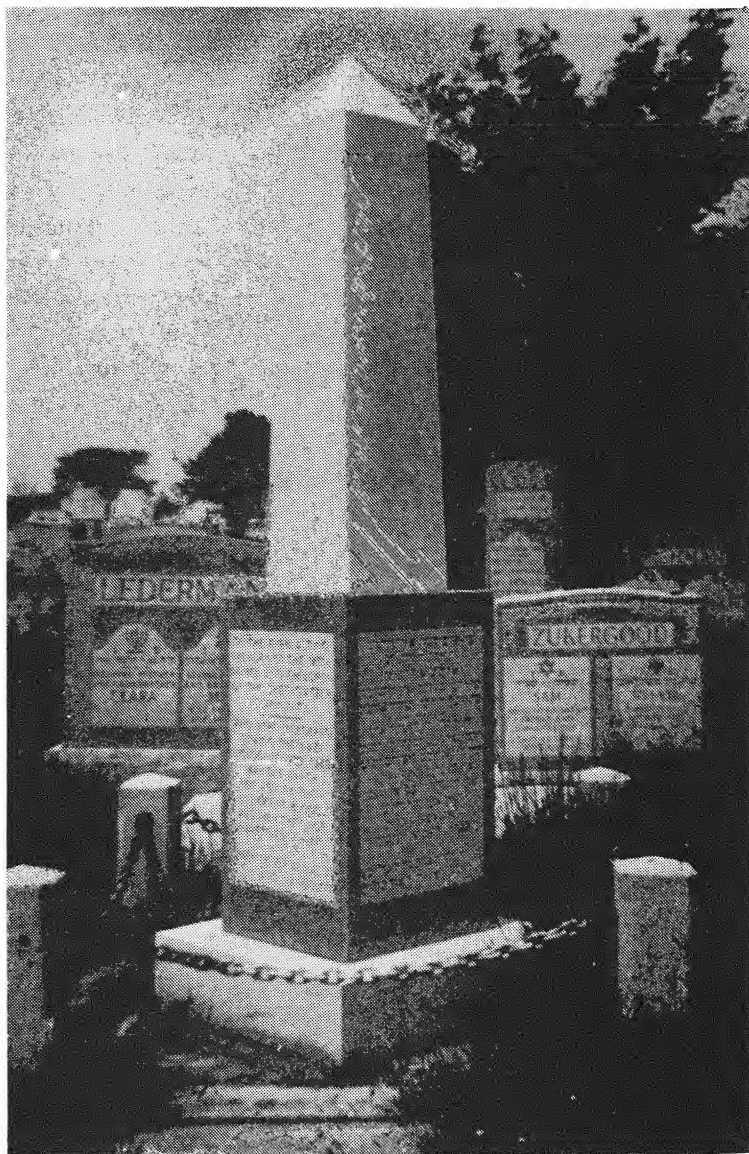
Shidlovtsar in Los Angeles



Shidlovtsers in Toronto



Shidlovtsers in Australia



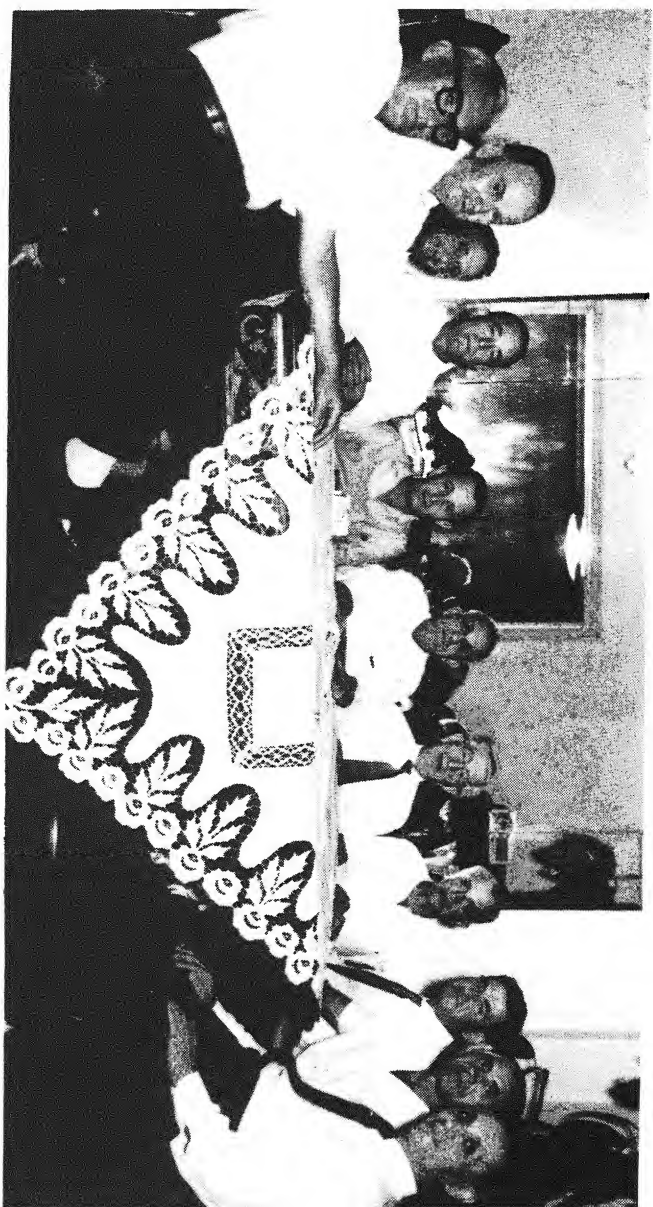
**Monument of the Shidlovtsers Martyrs on the Cemetery of
the Society in New York**



Shidlovtsers in New York Before W.W. 2



**Shidlovtsers in New York after meeting with
Hershel Rosenzweig
From *Paris*.**



Shidlovtsers in Brazil



Shidlovtsi Society in Paris

Authors of Article Writers



**AKIVA
BERLINSKI**



**LEON
GLAS**



**PHILIP
KORNBROT**



**ISRAEL
FRIDMAN**



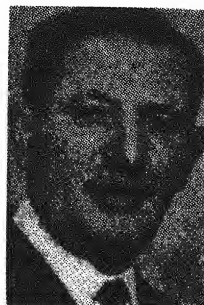
**SABINA
SVINKELSTEIN**



**JOSEF
SILBERSTEIN**



**MENACHEM
ROSENCWEIG**



**MOTL
EISENBERG**



**ISRAEL
DRANUDEL**



**ISAIAH
HENIG**



**HANAH
BAWNIK**



**YITZHOK
MILSTEIN**



**JACOB
SILBERMAN**



**ELKA
SILBERMAN**



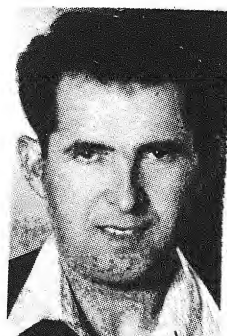
**MALKA
ROSENCWEIG**



**HARRY
KRYZ**



**MICHAEL
POMERANC**



**JACK
POMERANC**



**YITZHOK
GOLDKORN**



**ARNOLD
FINKLER**



**IRVING
MORO**



**DORA
BLANDER**



**BEN
BLANDER**



**JOSEF
FRIDENSON**



**BARUCH
FRISHMAN**



**ELKA
KLEIN**



**HANAH
FREILICH**



**BERL
KRAJEWSKI**



**GENIA
KORNBROT**



**ABE
ROSENBAUM**



**FREDKA
KUFLIK**



**HELLEN
KORNBROT**



**IRVING
KORNBROT**



**BENCYON
ROSENBERG**



**LEON
SILBERMAN**



**ALBERT
WEISBROD**



**FAYGA
TABRYS**



**MAX (OSTRO)
OSTROWIECKY**



**SARAH
ZELLER**



**JACOB
KATZ**



**LEAH
EISENBERG**



**MOSHE
KUNOWSKI**



**ROSE SCHWEBEL
and
GENIA PRUSZANOWSKI**



**JACOB and BRONEK
CYNGISER**



**HELLEN
MAYBRUCH**

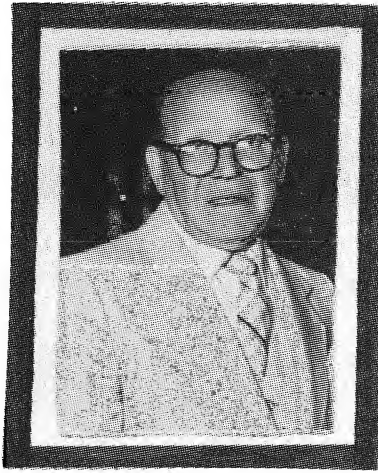




יִזְכֹּר עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל!

יִזְכֹּר עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת קְהִלּוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּאַרְצוֹת הַגּוֹלָה, שֶׁנַּעֲקְרוּ. שֶׁנִּחְרְבוּ וְשֶׁנִּמְחְקוּ. אֶת בְּנֵי הַמוֹמְתִים, קְרִבְנוֹת מַמְלַכַת הַרְשָׁע, שֶׁעָנֶה עֲנִיִּי גוֹף וְנַפֶּשׁ בְּמַחְנוֹת־הַהֶסְגֵּר: שֶׁנִּרְשָׁו לְאַרְץ נִגְרָה וְלֹא נִדְעוּ עֲקֻבוֹתֵיהֶם: שֶׁנִּזְחַחוּ בְּהֶמָּךְ בְּצִנְקִים וּבְרַחוּבוֹת: שֶׁהִוָּבְלוּ לְסִבָּח בְּקִרְוֹנוֹת־מוֹת: שֶׁנִּקְבְּרוּ חַיִּים, שֶׁנִּשְׂרְפוּ בְּהִיכְלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ עַל גִּילֵי־הַחֹרֶה, שֶׁנִּשְׁהֲטוּ, שֶׁנִּסְבְּעוּ וְשֶׁנִּחְנְקוּ: שֶׁחָלַל כְּבוֹדָם וְשֶׁפָּדָה דָּמָם בִּידֵים טְמֵאוֹת – עַל קְדוּשַׁת הַשֵּׁם.

יִזְכֹּר עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת יְלָדֵי מַחְמַדִּי, טְהוּרִים בְּנֵי טְהוּרִים, שֶׁנִּגְזְלוּ מִחִיק הוֹרֵיהֶם בִּידֵי חִתּוֹ־אָדָם וְהִוָּבְלוּ בְּצֶאֱן לְסִבָּחָה, שֶׁנִּעֲרְפוּ וְהוּמְתוּ בְּמִיתוֹת מְשֻׁנוֹת וְנִעֲרְמוּ עֲרֻמוֹת עֲרֻמוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ חוּצוֹת. עוֹלָלִים וְיוֹנְקִים שֶׁנִּפְצְאוּ אֶל אֲבֵנֵי קִיר, שֶׁשִּׁמְטוּ מִחוּמוֹת וְשֶׁהִשְׁלִיכוּ חַיִּים בְּשָׂקִים לְמַצוֹלוֹת נִהְרוֹת, וְנִקְטְפוּ חַיֵּיהֶם בְּאֶבֶם בִּידֵים אֲכֻרִיּוֹת – עַל קְדוּשַׁת הַשֵּׁם.



To the Eternal and Sacred Memory
of Our Beloved
IRVING MORA

Who had been organizations president
for many years and was also dedicated
to all Szydlowtzer Landslait all over the world.

Honored by the Members of
our Szydlowtzer Benevolent
Ass'n in *New York*,

Presidium

ABE ROSENBAUM, Chairman

ISAAC BAWNIK, Co-Chairman

JACOB SILBERMAN, Recording Secretary

YITZHOK MILSTEIN, Fin. Secretary

JACK RUBINFELD, Trustee



(רעכטס) הרה"צ ר' חיים אשר פינקלער אדמו"ר מרדושיץ זצ"ל
(ל'ינקס) הרה"צ ר' ישראל יוסף פינקלער אב"ד ואדמו"ר מרדושיץ זצ"ל
ובנו הרב קלמן פינקלער

Right:

Rabbi CHAIM-USHER FINKLER from Radoshitz

Left:

Rabbi ISRAEL-JOSEF FINKLER from Radoshitz
and Son: Rabbi KALMAN FINKLER

From

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Finkler & Family
Toronto, Canada



Eternal memory of my dear family
who perished in the Nazi Holocaust
al Kidush Hashem.

Parents: RABBI ISRAEL-YOSEF FINKLER

Mother: REBETSN CHAVA FINKLER

Brother: RABBI KALMAN-YITZHOK FINKLER
and Sister: MINDL

Our Beloved Daughter: MARILYN

She was taken away so early in life.

My previous wife:

ESTHER-RIVKA CHELMER (FINKLER) and

Our Son: YITZHOK-SHMUEL FINKLER

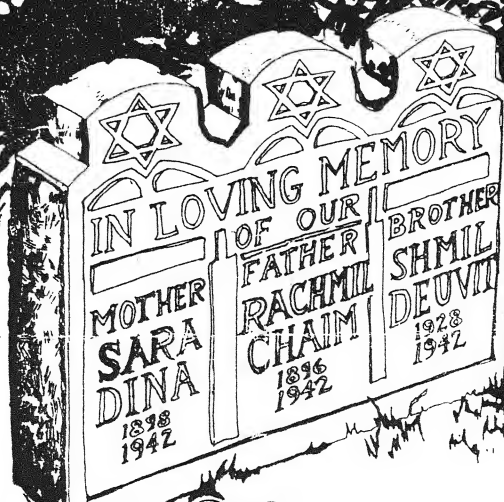
My Cousin: RABBI AIBESHITZ

We will cherish and honor their memory forever.

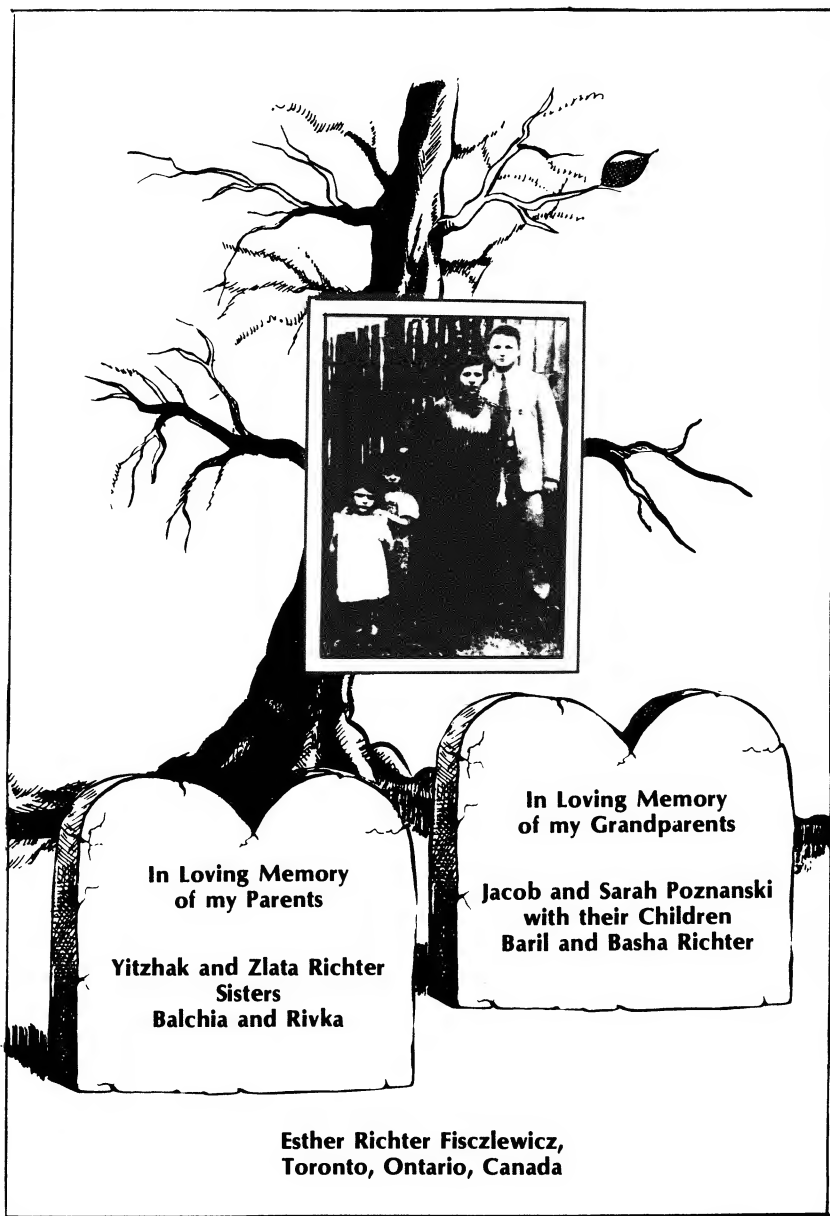
The only survivors:

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Finkler,
Toronto, Canada

SZYDLOVIEC



HONOURED BY
THE SURVIVING
CHILDREN.
SIMON, HARRY
AND BELLA
FISZLEWICZ



**In Loving Memory
of my Parents**

**Yitzhak and Zlata Richter
Sisters
Balchia and Rivka**

**In Loving Memory
of my Grandparents**

**Jacob and Sarah Poznanski
with their Children
Baril and Basha Richter**

**Esther Richter Fiszlewicz,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada**



In loving memory of our beloved mother
who survived the Holocaust and was taken
away so early in life.

BELA DEMBINSKI-MORA

Children: MICHEL and SUZAN MORA,
Brooklyn, NY

My Dearest Parents:

ABRAHAM-MORDECHAI and SARAH-DINAH MORA

Sister: **FEIGA-HODES and LAIBISH NUDELMAN**

Children: Chaya-Hinda, Yitzhok, Yankl, & Hanah

Sister: **RACHEL-LEAH and LAIBISH MODZIEWIECKI,**

Son: **NACHMI**

Brother: **MOSHE-BER**

Wife: **CHAVA** and Son: **MORDECHAI-MORA**

Brother: **MENACHEM-PINCHAS MORA**

FEIGA-TOBI and DIANA MORA

Irving Mora and Family, Brooklyn, NY



In loving memory of our dear Parents:
ABRAHAM DAVID and CHAYA GOLDBERG
Daughter: RIVKA and MENDEL MAJERFELD
Grandchildren: HANAH, MALKA, HELEN and
ABRAHAM.
Daughter: BELA and SIMON FUKS, and son
ABRAHAM.

From:
FAIGA GOLDBERG
BINA, SZTARK, and Family
GEORGE GOLDBERG and Family
LEON GOLDBERG and Family
THERESA ELSTEIN and Family
MORRIS GOLDBERG and Family
The SILBERMAN Family, *Brooklyn*



Dedicated in loving memory of our beloved and unforgettable who survived the holocaust and were taken away from us so early in life ELKA SILBERMAN. Also her brother and our brother-in-law EFROIM and sister-in-law FAIGA GOLDBERG. They will never be forgotten.

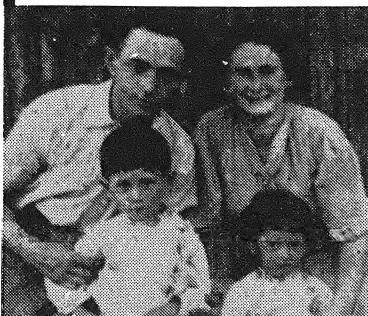
Their devoted Jacob Silberman and Sons:

Simon, Henry and Families: *Brooklyn*

Fayga Goldberg and children, George, Leon, Theresia,

Morris and Families: *Paris*

Bina Sztark, Emilia Perez and Family: *Paris*



Never will we forget
our beloved Parents:

SAMUEL HIRSH and CHAJA ESTHER SILBERMAN

Sister: HANAH

Husband: GETZL ROSENBAUM and Children

Sister: LEON GOLDNER

Sons: SAMUEL, HERSHL, JOSEF

Uncle: ABRAHAM and MIRIAM ZALCMAN,

Children: RIVA, MOSHE, JACOB JOSEPH
and BELLA

Uncle: NACHMAN, Wife: RIVA,

Children: NAFTALI, PERL, LEON.

Uncle: JOSEPH and DAVID BUK and Children,
and more members of our Family

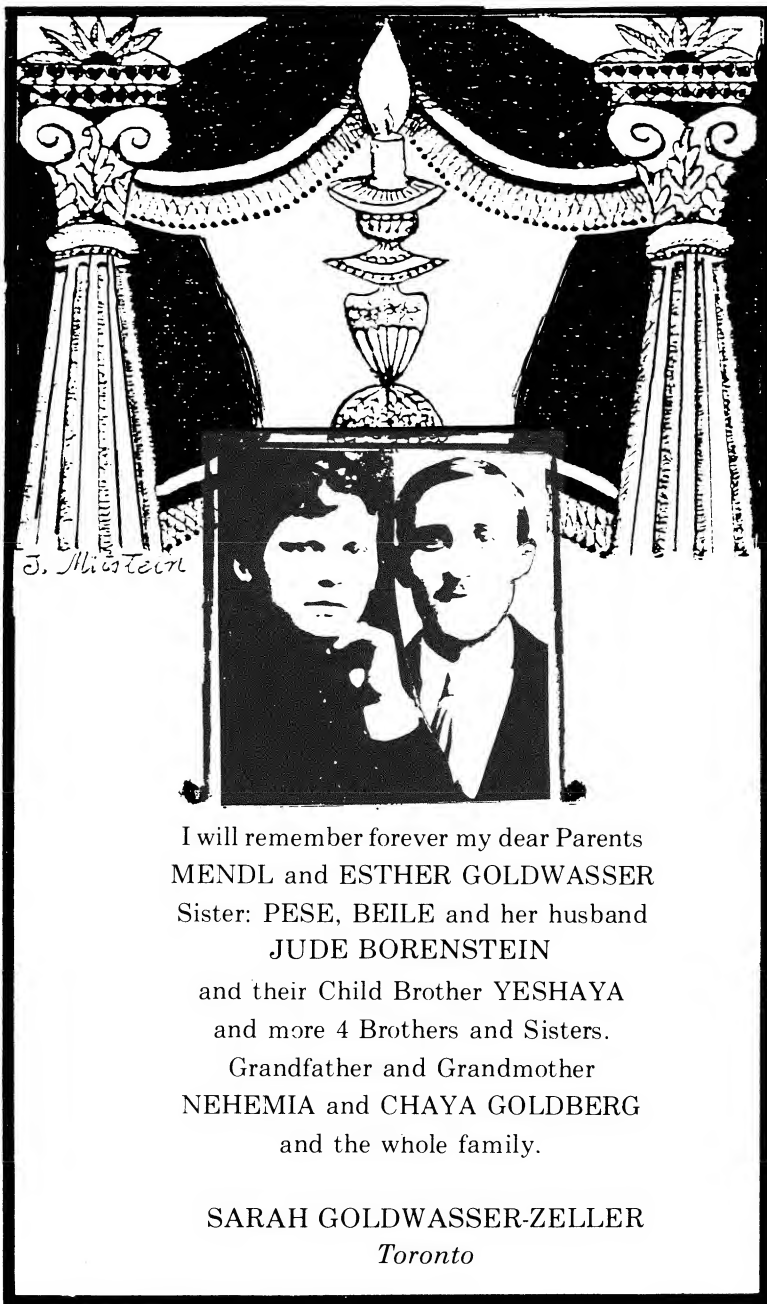
They lost their lives in the gas chambers of Treblinka
by the murderers, on 23 September, 1942.

Survivors:

Jacob Silberman and Family, *Brooklyn, N.Y.*

Malka Rosencweig and Family, *Paris*

Leon Silberman and Family, *Paris.*



I will remember forever my dear Parents
MENDL and ESTHER GOLDWASSER

Sister: PESE, BEILE and her husband
JUDE BORENSTEIN

and their Child Brother YESHAYA
and more 4 Brothers and Sisters.

Grandfather and Grandmother
NEHEMIA and CHAYA GOLDBERG
and the whole family.

SARAH GOLDWASSER-ZELLER

Toronto



In Memoriam to the sacred memory of my dear and
beloved family who perished in the death camp of
Treblinka al Kidush Hashem on Sept. 23, 1942

My Parents:

MORDECHAI MENACHEM (MOTL) and
ROCHELE (MILSTEIN)

Grandparents: NACHMI and GITELE DRAJNUDEL

Sister: CYPORA and CHAIM NOSEN DAVID KATZ

Children: JACOB

YITZHOK, SAMUEL, NACHMI,
LEAH, and ESTHER

Sister: FRIDA EDITH, and PINCHAS
WESTER, NACHMI

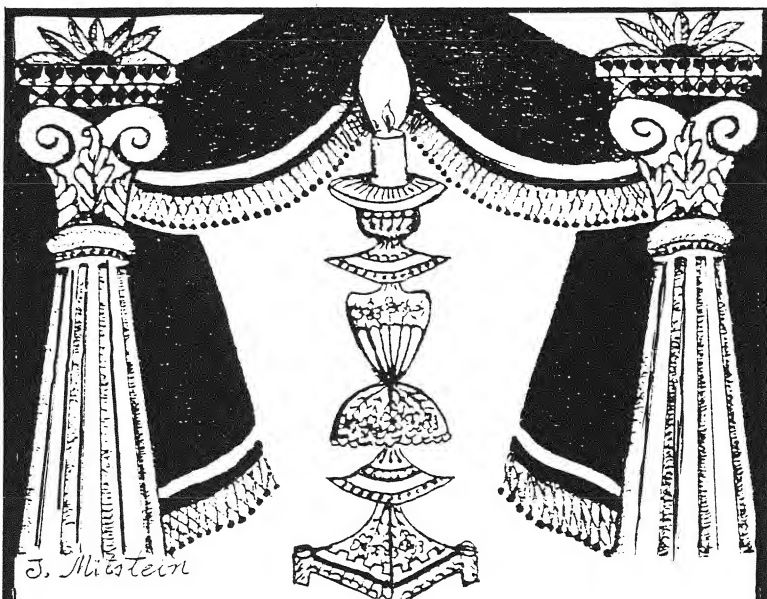
Brother: ISRAEL JACOB (SRULKI) and
ABRAHAM CHAIM MILSTEIN

Uncle: BARUCH and MIRIAM DRAJNUDEL

Uncle: ISROLIK and HANKA DRAJNUDEL

Uncle: JOSEPH and HANAH AIZENBERG,
YEHOASHUA and REBECA.

The only survivor Yitzhok Milstein
Brooklyn, N.Y.



In Memoriam of Our Beloved:

SAMUEL-CHAIM and HELLEN DAVIS.

HIRSH-MENDL and MIRIAM-SARAH DRANDELL.

MORRIS and HILDA DAVIS and MAYER DRANDELL.

BARUCH and MIRIAM DRANDEL

DEBORAH-PERL and HERSHL AICHENBAUM.

DR. SIDNEY BABBITZ and EDDY ACKERMAN.

From

DR. MILTON and DR. JACK DRANDELL
and FAMILIES, *California.*

SIDNEY DAVIS and FAMILY

Marland

DR. NORMAN DAVIS and FAMILY

Dr. IRVING DAVIS and Family

EDITH and ALBERT ROSENBERG
and FAMILY

HANAH BABITZ and FAMILY *Florida*

YITZYK MILSTEIN

Brooklyn



We will never forget Parents:

YITZHOK and GITL MILSTEIN

Grandparents: HERSHL and LEAH MILSTEIN

Uncle: MOTL and Auntie RACHEL MILSTEIN
and family

Uncle: MOSHE and YITA MILSTEIN,

Children: BENZION, ISRAEL-YITZHOK, MAIR HILEL

Uncle: SIMON and REBEKEA AGRES,

Children: TOBI, HINDA, RACHMIEL, CYVIA

Uncle: HERSHL, RACHEL BRONIEWSKI,

Children: MOSHE MEIR and family,

ESTHER, SARAH SHEINDL

Uncle: BARUCH and NAOMI CYNGISER,

Children: SARAH HANAH, ROSA and LEAH.

All Perished in the Nazi Holocaust.

Sept. 23 — 1942

From: Jacob Milstein, *Ramat Gan, (Israel).*

Yitzhok Milstein, *(Brooklyn).*

Abraham Milstein, *Kibutz Shfaim, (Israel).*

Hershel (Bronke) and Yitzhok Cyngiser,

Holon, (Israel).



Dedicated in LOVING MEMORY of
our dear Parents:

DAVID and ESTHER ROSENBAUM

Grandparents:

ISAIAH and CHANAH-FAIGA ROSENBAUM

Brothers:

SAMUEL and ISAIAH ROSENBAUM

Sister:

CESIA and MENASHA ROSENBLAT

Children: MOTL, LEAH, and MANIA

Sister: DORA and MOSHE GRINBERG

Children: LAYLE and TOBI ROSENBAUM

Surviving: ABE ROSENBAUM and Family, *Flushing*
GOLDI ROSENBAUM, *Paris*.



In loving memory

Parents: LAIBISH and LEAH YEHUDITH KORNBROT

Grandma: DEBORAH

Sister: TOBI RACHEL,

Husband: SOLOMON SZTAINOWICZ

Children: JOSEF, JACOB, AND BERL

Brothers: HERSHL, PHILIP, ISRAEL,

YTZHOK and Wife:

REBECCA (KUPERSHMIT) KORNBROT

Survivors:

Irving Kornbrot, Roma Rosenbaum, (Kornbrot)

Miriam Rosenfeld, Tola Staszewski (Kornbrot)

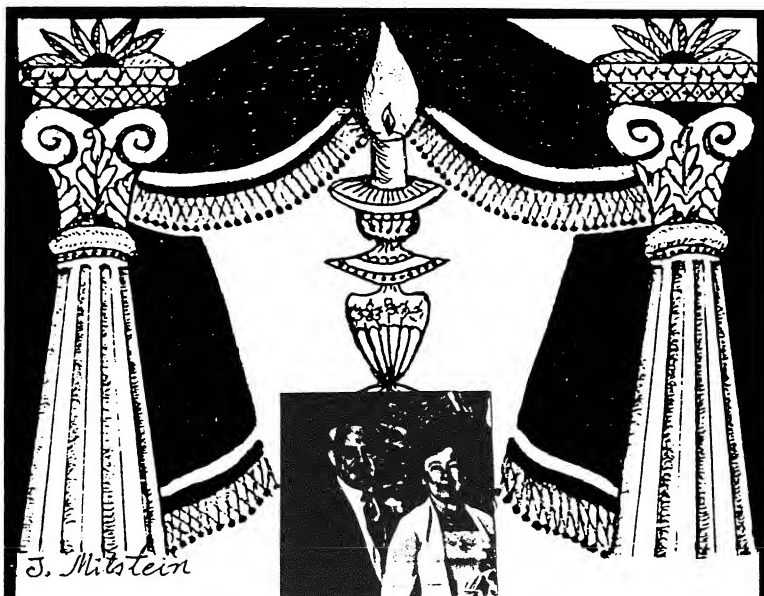
and their Families, *Flushing, NY*



In Loving Memory

My dear Parents,
LIBE and NOTE WEISBROT
Brother YANKL and BEILE WEISSBROT
and their 3 daughters.
Sister SARAH ZISEL and husband LEIZER MAYOVKE
and 2 daughters.
RIVKAH and YONAH BIST BINSTOCK

From
ABRAM WEISSBROT and FAMILY. *Florida*



To the Sacred Memory
of our Dear Parents:
ABRAHAM and BAT-SHEVA WEISBROT.

Sisters: FEIGA-TOBE PRIVA and
CYMEL WEISBROT.

Sister and Husband: MOSHE SHWARZ (WEISBROT)

They survived the Holocaust and
passed away young in the United States.
We will cherish and honor their memory forever.
May their names never be forgotten.

Max Webb (Weisbrot) and Family,
Beverly Hills, CA
Eizyk Weisbrot and Family,
Brooklyn, NY

In loving memory of our
dear Uncles, Aunties and Families:
They were deported and killed in Treblinka
al Kidush Hashem on the 23 of September 1942.
AARON and FRYMET BLUMENFELD

Children:
SHLOME, RIVKA AND RACHEL BLUMENFELD.
FRADL and MAYER, MANELA
Uncle: MOSHE and MANIALE BLUMENFELD
Children: AIZYK, HERSHL, YITZHOK, NUSYN.
RACHEL and SHLOIME MASLOWICZ
NATHAN and SHEVA BLUMENFELD and Children
ISRAEL AND TOBI LEDERMAN,
Children: JOSEF, JACOB.
YONA, ISRAEL WEISBROT
and their Wives and Children
Uncle: ABRAHAM and TSHARNE BRESLER

FROM
Max Webb (Weisbrot) and Family,
Beverly Hills, CA
AIZYK WEISBROT and Family,
Brooklyn, NY



In Loving Memory

Parents: YANKL, YOCHEVED BRONIEVSKI

Sisters: RIVKA, HINDE, LEAH

Grandpa, Grandma: RAFAEL, RACHEL ERLICHMAN;

GEDALIA, RACHELE BRONIEVSKI

Uncles: ELIEZER, SARAH ERLICHMAN

RACHMIEL, PERL ERLICHMAN

YONAH, MIRIAM BRONIEVSKI

BINEM, CHAYA-SARAH BRONIEVSKI

SAMUEL, NAOMI BRONIEVSKI

Aunts: ELKE and HENECH BOK and Children

CHANELE, PERL, TSIPORAH FRIED

MIRIAM ERLICHMAN, HINDE, SARAH and Children

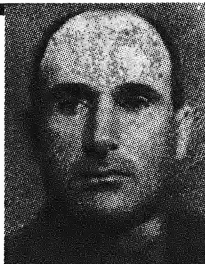
Neighbors: YOEL and PERL SHICHTER,

ITSHE ZAKON and Children,

GITE WAKS, and Children

From:

CHANTZE BAVNIK BRONIEVSKI and Family



In loving memory

of our perished grandparents:

YONA and ROSA BRONIEWSKI

Parents: JOSEPH DAVID and SARAH AIZENBERG

Sisters: MINDEL and HANNA-BELLA AIZENBERG

Brother: SAMUEL and Wife MANGE AIZENBERG

Uncle: LEIZER, Aunt: GIETEL

and Children: Broniewski

**Uncle: YOSSEL, Aunt: Deborah Broniewski
and Children.**

**Uncle: MEYER and HANNAH BRONIEWSKI
and Children.**

Uncle: MOSHE, Aunt: HINDA SPITZBERG.

**Uncle: MOSHE, Aunt: PAULA FEINTUCH
and the rest of our Aizenberg Family.**

The Survivors; Regina (Aizenberg) Netzler.

In loving memory of her husband

Moshe Netzler, *Melbourne, Australia.*

Rachel (Aizenberg) Mallen,

Children and Grandchildren.

In memory of her beloved husband:

Nathan Mallen, *Toronto, Canada.*

**Olga (Aizenberg) Galas and Family
*Stockholm, Sweden***

Regina (Broniewski) Teichman and Family

Tivon, Israel



In loving memory of our dear Parents:

Father: MOTL EISENBERG, died 1961

Mother: RACHEL EISENBERG, died 1986

Brother: SALOMON EISENBERG

who lost his wife on January the 18, 1945, when he was
deported from Auschwitz to Buchenwald

Their Son: Moshe Eisenberg & Family

Their Daughter: Chana Rosenberg & Family

Paris

Our beloved Parents: YITZCHAK ELCHANAN
and SARAH ETA EISENBERG,
like my Paternal Grandparents
Israel and Chaya Eisenberg

Owned leather factories in Szydlowiec.

In 1942 the Germans placed a Commisar in my Parents factory. Prior to that time, we had build an underground bunker where my Parents, my late Husband and myself, our baby Feivel, My Sister Goldale and other relatives were hiding. We hid in the bunker for approximately six weeks, when early one morning the Gestapo discovered us. After we were ordered out of the bunker, the Gestapo forced us to take the Sifrei Torah out of my Parents office and to unroll the Torah Scrolls on the ground. We were then ordered to walk on the Sifrei Torah or be killed on the spot. We were marched to a place near the Magistrate where other Jews who had been hiding were also brought. The Germans took us to Verke in Skarzysko, where we were placed in forced labor. My Sister Goldale was also with us and she played a very important role in helping me take care of our son who we lost shortly before the liberation. Our beloved Parents, who were devoted to Yiddishkeit and Tzedakah, were Hasidim of the Radoszicer Rabbi. My late Husband, Motel, who was taken away from us early in his life, was a devoted Gerer Hasid.

May their memory be always with us.

Chaya Dina Eisenberg Smedra



Devoted he was to God, Nation and Family. Beloved by his peers in his good deeds. Dedicated to Torah, even in the days of the Holocaust. Honor and respect he conveyed to all his acquaintances. May his memory be blessed to the world to come.

Husband and Father

ר' מרדכי זאב בר' שרגא פייוול שמעדרא

Passed away the 10th day of Shevat 5729 1969

This is also a Memorial to his son who passed away in his youth

שרגא פייוול בר' מרדכי זאב הי"ד

Beloved Husband And Father:

MAX SMEDRA 1914 - 1969

May his soul rest among the living

Chaye-Dinah Smedra-Eisenberg

Los Angeles



In sacred and loving memory
of our Beloved Parents:

YITZCHOK ELCHONAN and
SARAH ETHEL EISENBERG

Grandparents: CANTOR YAAKOV and
MIRIAM FLIEGEL

ISRAEL (SRULKLE) and HINDA EISENBERG

Aunt and Uncle: HIRSH LEIB and
MISHA ALBERT

Brother in Law: MOTL and
Son: FAIWALE SMEDRA

Girlfriends: MANIA SHTAINMAN,
CHAVALE SHTAJERMAN

They were my dear and close friends. Their love,
devotion and loyalty we shared I will always cherish in
my memory, together with the memory of my Parents
and all our family.

Golda Eisenberg (Finkel), Baltimore
Deborah, Tsevi Grindman and Family,
Tel-Aviv



In Loving Memory
of Our Beloved
Husband, Father and Grandfather
who survived the holocaust,
and was taken away from us so early in life
on Oct. 30th 1988
NATHAN BROTMAN.
We will cherish and honor his memory forever

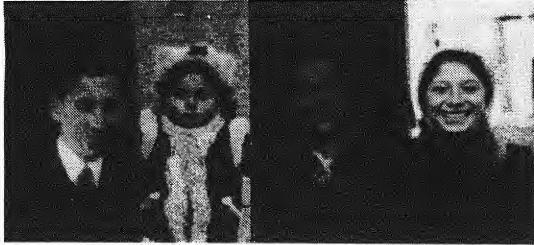
Honored by the surviving wife
EVA BROTMAN
Loving children NANCY and SHIRLEY
and their Families

In Memoriam

Of our dear family who perished in the
Nazi Holocaust AL KIDUSH HASHEM in TREBLINKA

Sep. 23-1942

our Parents: YITZHOK and HANAH PERL WESTER.
SISTER and Husband SARAH and SOLOMON KAUFMAN
and Their child TAYBALE
YOUNGEST SISTER CHAIYUSHA.



In Loving Memory of
SISTER-IN-LAW ADELA WESTER, NEE KAUFMAN.
and her 2 Sons
YOSELE, AGE 2 and YECHIEL-MICHAEL AGE 1.



From

CHAIM WESTER and Family
WLADEK WEST (WESTER) and Family
BRONIA LAITMAN (nee WESTER) and Family
RUSHKA STIGLEC (nee WESTER) and Family
Melbourne, Australia



In Loving Memory of our dear.

UNCLE MOSHE and AUNTIE ESTHER ROSENBLAT.

COUSINS: CHAIM, KIVA, LEIBUSH and LONIA.

UNCLE: ZEMACH and AUNTIE SHEIVA ROSENBLAT.

COUSINS: BALCIA and ISRAEL WEICHENDLER
and child.

COUSINS: RACHEL ROSENBLAT (STARK.)

ELIEZER and LAIBL.

WLADEK WEST (WESTER) and FAMILY

BRONIA LAITMAM (nee WESTER) and FAMILY

RUSHKA STIGLEC (nee WESTER) and FAMILY

CHARLIE ROSS (ROSENBLAT) and FAMILY

CHAIM WESTER and FAMILY

FELA DORON (ROSENBLAT) and family ISRAEL

*They survived the Holocaust, concentration camps and
after that settled in Melbourne, Austrlia.*

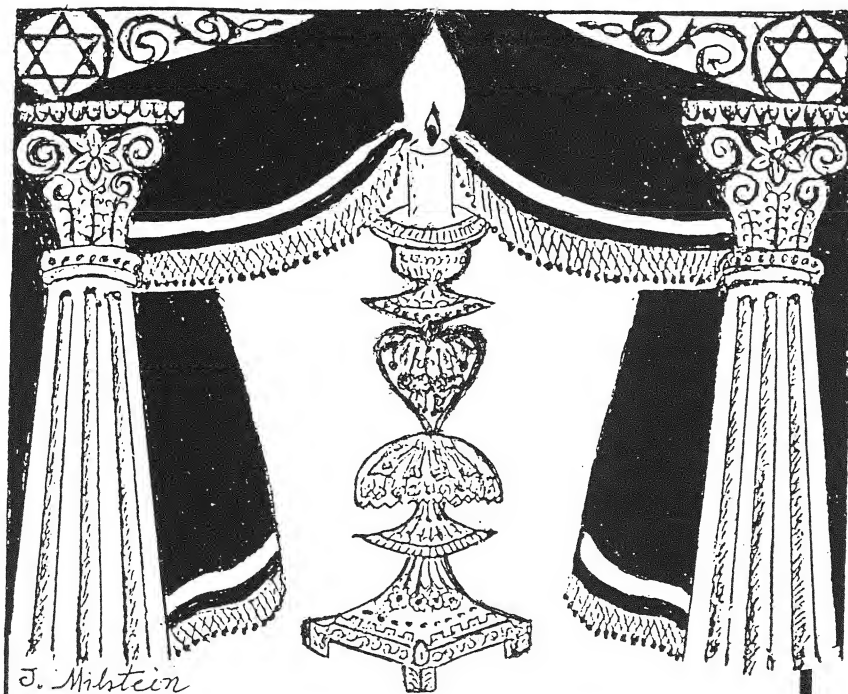


The only survivors, from left BRONIA LAITMAN,
nee WESTER and RUSHKA STIGLETZ,
nee WESTER.



From right to left AKIVA LIBERBAUM, who lost his
wife after the liberation in Kelcer Pogrom.
JACOB SZCZENSZLIWY, BERL BEKERMASZYN.
II row MENASHE CYTRYN.

The only Survivor WLADISLAW WESTER
Melbourne, Australia



J. Miltstein

To the sacred memory of my dearest and
beloved family who perished in the death camp
Treblinka on Jan. 13th 1943 Al Kidush Hashem
my father.

ר' שמואל אסטראוויצקי
א תלמיד מובהק פון הרה"צ אדמו"ר ואב"ד הרב
ר' מאיר יהואל הלוי זצ"ל
דער אסטראוויצער רבי

My Mother: SARAH-HANAH OSTROWIEKI

My Sister: RACHEL-LEAH

Husband: LEIBL CIMROT and Children

Brothers: CHANYNA-AARON and
YECHESKEL BENJAMIN.

The only survivor
MAX OSTROWIEKI (OSTRO)
and family
New York.

In memoriam of my dearest
Parents: YECHIEL-ABISH and
YITAH-RACHEL BLANDER
Brothers: USHER-YEHUDA, MOSHE-SHACHNE
and SARAH-HINDA and Children
Brother: SHRAGAH-FAIWE BLANDER
Sisters: HANAH MATL and ROCHEL-LEAH
UNCLE: CHAIM-HIRSH and ROCHEL BLANDER
and Family
SYMCHA-LEIBISH and FRAIDA EISENSTAT
and Family
MORDECHAI-MENDL and CHANAH-LEAH PARIS
and Family
CHAIM and SARAH YITAH LERMAN and Family
Cousins: YITZHOK and YITKA SZTAINMAN,
JOSEF and BELA KONOPKA,
BINEM and REBECCA SZOTLAND & their Children.

From
Binem Blander and Family,
Brooklyn, NY

In loving memory of my Dearest
Parents: ABRAHAM-HIRSH and
ESTHER-MIRIAM ROSENCWEIG
Grandparents: MOSHE-LEVI and
TOBI-NEAMI ZABOROWSKI
Grandparents: ELIEZER-LIPE and
CHAYA ROSENCWEIG
Brothers: SALOMON-BARUCH, YITZHOK-JACOB
and ISAIAH
Sisters: GITELE and SARAH RIVKA
Uncle: YITZHOK and ELKE ROSENCWEIG
and Family
MOSHE and MALKA, SAMUEL and FAIGA,
PINCHOS and BELA
SAMUEL and RACHEL TURKOW and Family
AIZYK and REBECCA LUSTGARTEN and Family
YIDEL BACH and Children
MEYER and CHAYA SPIGEL and Children
and the only one brother who survived the
Holocaust and the Concentration Camps and passed
away in the United States
MENACHEM ROSENCWEIG

The only survivor
Dora Blander and Family, Brooklyn, NY



In loving memory of my Parents:

ABRAHAM and NESI POMERANZ

Sisters and Brothers: ESTHER-LEAH

RACHEL LUBA, NAOMI and WOLF CHAIM

My Uncles, Aunties, and Cousins:

JOSEF, MINDL POMERANC and Children, ISRAEL-YITZCHOK, ESTHER, MAIR, JACOB, MILKA, CHAJA-LEAH, MALKA MOSHE-CHAIM and MALKA BACH, Sons: JACOB ABRAHAM and Children ZALMAN AND SARAH CYMBALIST and 2 Sons and Daughters. HERSHEL and NAOMI WESTER, Children JACOB, SARAH, ESTHER, NATHAN LYN, MORI MEIR-ZELIG and GITEL CUKER Children SAMUEL-JACOB, YITZCHOK ABRAHAM, AARON, BARUCH FEIVEL and ESTHER KUPPERSHMIT, Children ALTE, BENJAMIN, LUBA and ELIA YAREMI and MINDY LEVIN, Children SAMUEL WOLF, YONA, ELIA, and MICHAEL WOLF and HANAH WOLOWSKI, Children HIRSH NATAN, EVA, SIMON and LUBA. JACOB and SHAINDL WARSZAWSKI, Children MOSHE, RACHEL, ABRAHAM and CHAJA-SARAH GOLDMAN, CHILDREN YECHEZKEL, SAMUEL, RACHEL, LUBA MIREL and YEHUDITH SHLAK, Children RACHEL, FISHEL.

Grandparents: JACOB and LEAH POMERANC and FISHEL, RACHEL LEVIN

*From: JACK and JEAN POMERANZ and FAMILY
Hollywood, California*

In Loving Memory
R'LEVI ZE'EV SILBERMAN
And His Wife
RASHA-RIVKA ROSENBAUM

Sons
YEHESKEL, ISAAC,
MORDECHAI, ISRAEL

Daughters
MADZHE, ROSE, SARAH;

Families of Our Uncles
R'NOTE ROSENBAUM and Wife ROSE;
R'MOSHE ROSENBAUM and Wife MIRIAM;
R'ABRAHAM AVISH and Wife GOLDE;

R'YEHOSHUA SILBERMAN, R'SHLOMO SILBERMAN,
R'JACOB SILBERMAN, R'YECHIEL WEISER,
R'ELIEZER SILBERMAN and R'BUNEM SILBERMAN

GITEL and JOSEPH FRIDENSON
and Family



To The Sacred Memory of our beloved Husband,
Father and Grandfather

SAUL SLOTOV (ZLOTOWICZ)

Our sorrow will never dissappear from our hearts,
he will never be forgotten.

From his devoted wife HINDA SLOTOV

Children and Grandchildren

Brother and Sister and their families.

SAUL SLOTOV

We remember him from his Childhood when
he was very young. He helped his parents
to make a living, when the war broke out,
he went through the concentration camps.

His first camp was YANISHEW.

With his talant and energy
he helped his brother, sister and his future wife
and they survived the Concentration Camps.
After the war he came to the United States
and settled in Los Angeles. He built up a
business and took care of the whole family.
Suddenly he passed away very young, and that
was a big tragedy for the family, and
for all of us SZYDLOWTZER.
He will never be forgotten.



To the sacred memory of my dear family, who
perished in the death Camp Treblinka on 23th of
September 1942 Al Kidush Hashem

My Parents: HERSHEL and CHAYA-ROCHEL KOCHAN
BROTHER: GERSHON and SISTER PEARL KOCHAN

My beloved husband, Father and Grandfather
SAUL SLOTEV (Zlotowitz) who survived the Holocaust
and were taken away so early in life.

The only survivor
HINDA-LEAH (KOCHAN) SLOTOV
and family

Los Angels, Calif.



In loving memory of
my dear Husband, Father, and Grandfather:

MOSHE KUNOWSKI

His Parents: HERSHEL and GELA KUNOWSKI
and the whole family.

My Parents: CHAIM and ETHEL KURLENDER

Brothers: ELI and MENASHE

Sisters: MALKA, RACHEL, and SIMON TENENBAUM,

Son: ABRAHAM,

and the whole family.

They were killed by the murderers in Treblinka with
all the Jews of Szydlowiec on Sept. 23, 1942, they will
never be forgotten.

The only survivor:

Rosa Kunowski (Kurlender) and Family

Los Angeles, California



In loving memory of my dearest
and beloved Parents:

SHMUEL-HERSHEL and SHAINDL KURLENDER
Brothers: DAVID ABRAHAM and JACK KURLENDER
Who survived the Holocaust and the concentration
camps and was taken away so early in life from his
devoted wife and children in the United States.
Grandparents: YITSHE and SARAH KURLENDER.
Who were murdered by the Germans in Treblinka on
Sept. 23, 1942

The only survivor:
Fredka Kuflik (Kurlender) and Family,
New York



In memory of
my beloved Parents:
JOSEPH and CYPA LEAH KUNOWSKI
Brother: OSHER and RESHKA and CHILDREN
Sisters: PERL and PINCHAS GUTMAN
and CHILDREN
Sisters: BELA and ABRAHAM OSTROWIECKI
and CHILDREN
Sisters: HANAH RIVKA and
MOSHE YECHIEL-SZAIN

The only survivor
Motek Ber Kunowski

In loving memory of
my beloved Parents:
YITZHOK and SARAH RYVKA-HENIG
and GRANDPARENTS
Brother: NEHEMIA MEYER
Sister: BEILA GOLDIE HENIG
Auntie: CAITL
Uncle: JACOB HERBLUM and 4 Children
Auntie: EVA LEAH
and Husband: YECHIEL DREZNER and Child
Uncles: JACOB and BARUCH SZLISKY
and their Families
Aunties: DEBORAH SZLISKY and Her 3 Sons
Uncle: SAMUEL and Auntie ETHEL BRANDMESER.
Uncle: MEYER HENIG his Wife,
2 Daughters-Grandchildren.
Auntie: BINA
and Husband: MOSHE ZELIG SZAINFELD
and 3 Daughters
Auntie: FEIGELE from Checin and 3 Sons
Cousins: ROSE and FISHL BRANDMESER
and Children
Cousins: MEYER and ZLATA BRANDMESER
and Children
Cousins: HANAH and NATHAN ZALCMAN
and Children
My wife's Mother LEAH MARKOWITZ
and her Mother REBECCA KAPLOWICZ
and her relatives.
Cousins: BELA and ISRAEL GERTNER and CHILDREN

Isaiah Henig and Family
Silverspring, Washington, D.C.



In loving memory

of our parents

SAMUEL and ALTA BLEICHMAN

Sisters: CHAJELE and MANIA BLEICHMAN

Brother: MAYER BLEICHMAN

Grandfather: ISUCHER BRANDMESER

From: FEIGA and ZELIK PODOLSKI, Brooklyn

ROCHTSHE BLEICHMAN, Brasil

LEIZER BLEICHMAN, Chicago



In Loving Memory

My Parents

SAMUEL-HIRSH and CHAYA-SARAH ROSENBAUM,

Brother TEVE-OSHER,

Sisters PRIVE, PERL, Uncles ISRAEL,

JACOB and YECHIEL and MALKA ROSENBAUM

Cousins: GETZEL and wife and children.

ISAAC and FAIGE ALPERT-ROSENBAUM.

LEYBL, HERSHE, ISKE, PRIVE, CHANA

BERNARD ROSENBAUM and Family



In loving memory of my beloved family
Parents: ISRAEL and SHAINDL ROSENBAUM
Sisters: SARAH-HANAH, PERL and REEVA
My Unforgotten Wife: SHAINDL (SONSZAIN) ROSENBAUM

Uncle: HERSHL, Auntie SHIFRA MANELA
Cousins: MAYER, ZELIG Wife POLA MANELA

From
Mailech Rosenbaum, *Chicago*



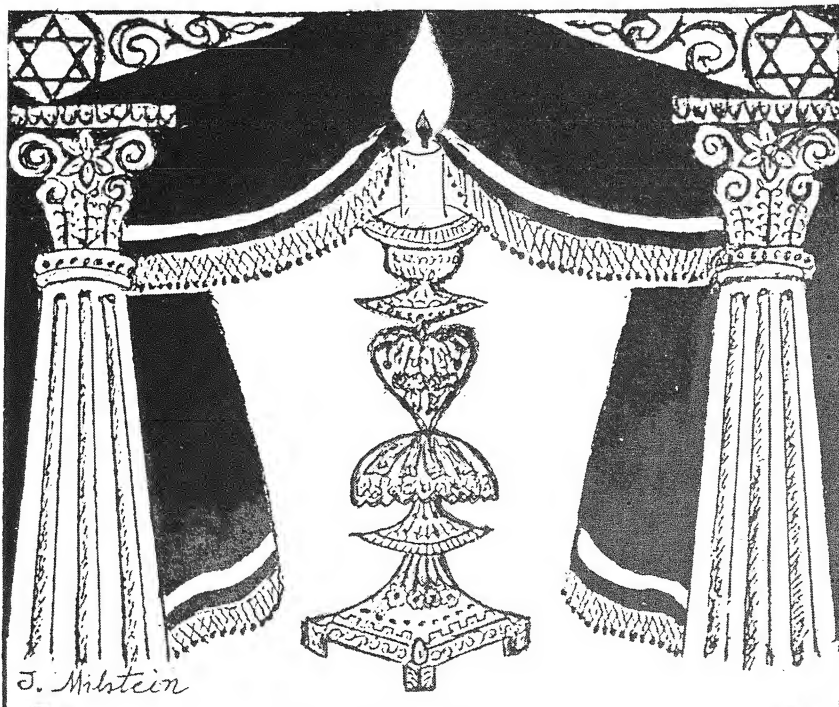
In loving memory
of our dear Parents and Grandparents:
DOVID and MINDEL ZOMBER.

Jeffrey and Malkie Zell & Children
Samuel and Riva Zomber & Children



In loving memory of
our dear Brothers and Sisters
who were killed during the Holocaust
ELCHANON YAAKOV
PRIVA
YITCHOK MORDECHAI
CHANA

From
Jeffrey and Malkie Zell
Samuel and Reva Zomber



In Loving Memory of my dearest
PARENTS: DAVID and BINA FRYSZMAN.
BROTHER: DOV BER (BERISH) and FAMILY
ISRAEL and FAMILY
ABRAHAM and FAMILY
ZEW WOLF the youngest.
SISTER: PERL, husband JACOB AIZENBERG.
Daughter NEHAMA.
SISTER: ROSA and DAVID GOLDBERG
and the new born baby on the day of deportation.
Mother and child were shot by
the murderers on September 23, 1942.

From
their devoted survivor son and brother
BARUCH FRISHMAN and FAMILY
Dallas, Texas

I would like to add a few words about my brothers and myself. My brother Bairech from Strachowice saw the only way to survive is to give away his warehouse of piece goods to some Nazis in Lager, Starachowice. He hoped that they would hide him, and protect him but one night the Nazis came suddenly to take his wife and child away. He had a chance to survive but he chose to go with his loved ones to death. The maiden name of his wife was Brotbeker. My brother Israel passed away during the war in Szydlowiec. Another brother from Radom, Avraham, used to work in Shtainbrook in Radom. I want to add here an unknown fact of the murderous tricks of the Nazis. In 1944 the Nazis in Shtainbrook announced that anybody who has family in Israel can register so the Nazis could swap him for a German in Israel. He and 34 other Jews registered. Then they were gathered together and taken to a nearby forest and shot there.

On Yom Kippur before everyone was forced on board the trains to Treblinka, my Father told me that I had more of a chance to survive if I will be registered to go to Starachowice and I did. From there I was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Then I was sent to Orenienburg, later to Flossenburg. I was liberated in Immendingen Bathem Batham.



In loving memory
of our Parents:

YECHIEL YEHOSHUA and GITELE LEDERMAN

Brothers: LEIZER and ITSCHIE LEDERMAN

Sisters: REBECCA and LEON GERTNER

Sister: SABINA SVINKELSTEIN (Lederman)

Survivors

Hershel Lederman and FAMILY, Vineland

Rachela Lederman-Celniker, Tel-Aviv

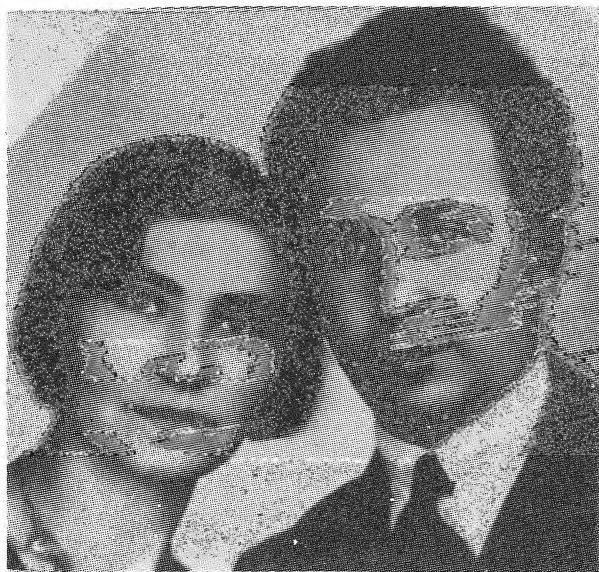
Sonia Lederman (Monk), Israel

Bluma Lederman-Sheinwar, Brasil.



In loving memory of
our Beloved Mother and Wife:
SABINA SVINKELSTEIN (LEDERMAN)
who was taken away so early in life

From:
her devoted Children
Gail Svinkelstein,
Allen Svinkelstein (Husband)
Emanuel Svinkelstein



In memory of my dearest

Parents: MOSHE and MINDL MIDLARSKI

Brothers: RUVEN and RACHEL-ITA and Children

YIDL and Wife, YITSHE his wife YOCHAVED

(ROSENEWEIG) MIDLARSKI

Sister: SARAH MIDLARSKI KOHEN,

Children MASHALE and YITZYKL

Survivor:

Rosa Midlarski Kwiatowsky, *Paris*

In Eternal Memory
My Parents
SHIMELE and CIPE GRICHMAN
Sister and Sister-in-Law
LIBE and ABRAHAM-ISAAC GRICHMAN
Sisters
PESE and HINDE
Brothers
MORDECHAI-ARON
RAFAEL and SHAMAI
RIVKA GRICHMAN-MENDELSON

My Parents
JECHESKEL, GOLDE-RIVA MENDELSON
Sister
FRIEDE-FEIGA
Brothers
MORDECHAI and HESKEL

From: JOSEPH and RIVKA MENDELSON
Los Angeles



In Loving Memory
of our dear Parents who perished
in the Nazi Holocaust Al Kidush-Hashem
In Treblinka 23 Sept. 1942.

Parents:

MOSHE and CHAYA SIMCHA WEICHENDLER

Sisters:

BLUMA and YUMA KAPLER (WEICHENDLER)

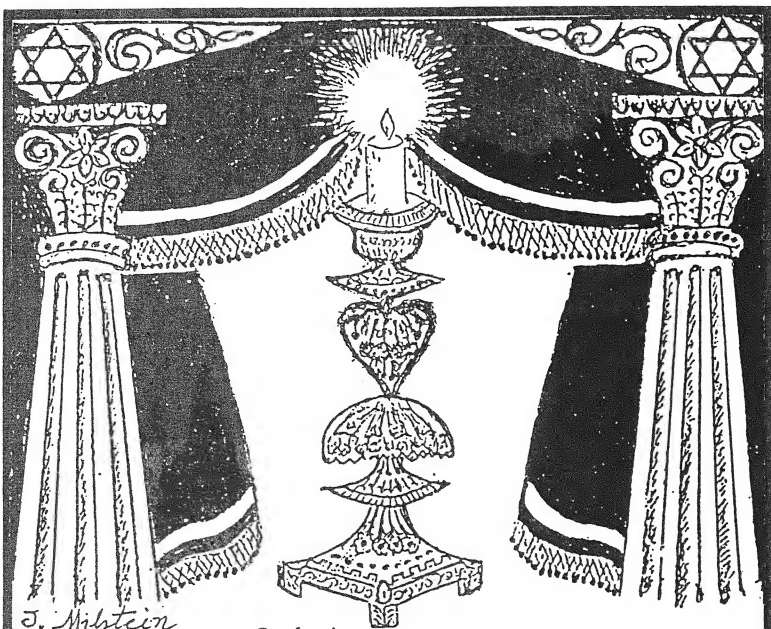
Brothers: AZRYEL, ISRAEL and FAMILIES

Sisters: MATHEL and PERELKA

Brothers: FAIVEL and HERSHEL

From:

ZELDA and ESTHER WEICHENDLER



In loving memory
of our beloved Parents:

YITZHOK and SARAH LEAH SZTEINOWICZ

Brother: JOSEF

Sisters: SHEINDL and ESTHER FEIGA

Grandparents: CYRL and KOPEL SZTEINOWICZ

SHIFRA and JOSEF SZTEINOWICZ

Uncles and Aunts:

from the family Szteinowicz:

HIRSH MENDEL, SALOMON, CHAIM JACOB, MENDEL,

AARON, ZUSMAN, FAWEL, and their Families.

ALTA and MOSHE ROSENCWEIG and 3 Children.

GOLDE-MEIER, HILEL BLIZYNSKI and Families.

from

RIVA ZUBERMAN and Family.

Sisters: ROSE SHWEBL (SZTEINOWICZ)

GENIA PRUSZNOWSKI (SZTEINOWICZ)

Toronto, Canada

In eternal memory of our dear Father,
respected Chosid of Ger,
MOSHE SHRAYBERERG and
MOTHER CYIML-ESTHER-TENENBAUM (Tishre, 1942).

Our Sister and Mother: DEBORAH (Daughter of Naomi,
alive), 6 years (Tishre 23, 1942).

SARAH-CHANAH (Daughter of Ya'kov Joseph). 7 years
(Tishre 23, 1942).

Brother: R' YA'AKOV JOSEPH. (Adar 15, 1945) and Wife:
TAL GITL, daughter of R' SHIMON MILSTEIN (Elul 21,
1939), their Daughters: SARAH, MALKA (Elul 21, 1939),
CHANAH (Tishre 23, 1942).

Brother: R' TSVI-BUNEM (SHEVAT 9, 1943) and Wife:
SARAH, daughter of R' ABRAHAM-MORDECAI
TAUMAN of Kielce, Daughter: TOBA (Tishre 16, 1942).

Brother-in-Law: R' ABRAHAM-DAVID GUTLERNER of
Janow-Lubelsk (Shevat, 1943), Daughter: DEBORAH-
CHAYA (Tishre 16, 1942).

Uncle R'MORRIS and Wife SIFRE and their children.
Most of them perished in Treblinka.

Elke, David Klein & Family, *New York*
Naomi, Jonathan Friedman, *Tel-Aviv*
Franie, Jaakov, Shwarzfuter and family,
Tel-Aviv



In loving memory
of our dearest Wife,

Mother and Grandmother:

CHAVA ARBITSMAN (HONIGMAN)

Grandparents:

HIRSH-WOLF and FRAIDL HONIGMAN

Uncles: MENDL and SYMCHA-BINEM

Aunties: ESTHER and SARAH-MINDL

Grandfather: ISRAEL-YITZHOK,

famous as ISRAEL YITZHOK the MELAMED

Chavale came from a nice Chasidic family in Szydlowiec. During the summer of 1942 Chavale was caught with many of the young girls and sent to work in the Hasag. From the chemicals and explosives she and the others turned yellow. In 1944 she was evacuated from the Hasag to Germany. In the beginning of May 1945 she was liberated. She came to the United States with her husband and 2 sons. She passed away young as a victim of the Holocaust. She will never be forgotten.

Survivors: Aaron Arbitsman

Zvi Ben Aharon and Family,

Framingham, Mass

Yossy Arbitsman and Family,

Westfield, New Jersey



In memory of our beloved:
 Brother, AZRIEL WAICHENDLER
 Sisters, BLUMA and PERELKA WAICHENDLER.

From: Zosia Wajman and Family, Vineland
 Esther Rothman and Family, Florida.

In loving Memory of our dear family
 who perished in the Nazi Holocaust

Parents: MOSHE DAVID and HELLEN
 SZCZENSHLIWIY

Brothers: JACOB NATHAN, SAMUEL
 and YERACHMIL

Uncles: SHALOM, FREEMET SZCZENSHLIWI

Children: REBECCA, HANAH, SAMUEL and YOSI
 and the whole family.

From Rachela and Harry Langer (Szczenshliwy)
 Chancia Tuchmayer (Szczenshliwy)
 and the families, Los Angeles

In Loving Memory
of our dear Parents
GODL and RACHELE ZYSMAN,
Brother LAYBISH and his wife, and child
Sister CYRIL ZYSMAN, and all our
uncles, aunties and families.

From: Moshe Zysman and family, Los Angeles
Laya Dimant -- Israel
Gela Zysman -- Israel

In Memory of my beloved parents
who survived the holocaust and were taken away
so early in life.
YITZHOK and EVA GOLDBERG (Aizenberg)
and their families.
We will cherish, and honor their memory for ever

From: Harry Goldberg and family
Vineland, N.J.

In loving memory of
my beloved Parents:

Father: MOSHE-AARON STAL, 1885-1942

Mother: ESTHER-ROSE STAL, 1895-1942

Sisters: ROCHELLE STAL,

Married to ASHER KUNOWSKI and Children
YOCHEVED STAL, Teacher,

Married in Radom, Had 2 Children

DOROTHY STAL (1923-1942)

PAULA STAL (1927-1942)

MIRIAM STAL (1930-1942)

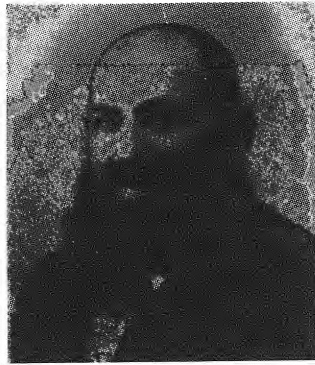
YETTA STAL (1933-1942)

BASHA STAL (1936 -1942)

Brothers: JOSEPH NATHAN STAL (1914-1983)

HERSHEL STAL Born 1917, Mother Died at
Childbirth. Went to Russia in 1939 and was Killed in
Russian army. On September 23 1942 everyone except
Joseph Nathan, Samuel and Morris were taken on a
transport to the death camp Treblinka. Joseph Nathan
and Morris were the only survivors. After the war
Joseph Nathan and his wife emigrated to Philadelphia
where he died in 1982.

The only survivor
Morris Stal and Family
Wilmette, Illinois, U.S.A.



In memoriam to the sacred memory of our beloved
family who perished in the Nazi holocaust in Treblinka
on Sept. 23, 1942

Parents: MAYER DAVID and PERELE MINCBERG

Sisters: SARAH and JACOB KATZ
SHEVA and PEREZ KUPERSHMIDT
GUTSHA and AKIVA LIBERBAUM

Uncle: MOSHE and Auntie: ESTHER MINCBERG
Cousin ISRAEL and their Family.

The only survivor JOSEPH MINCBERG and Family
Houston, Texas.



In loving memory of our beloved Parents:
SHMUEL-ELI and GITL HOCHBERG
Murdered together with all the Jews from
Szydlowiec in Treblinka, by the Nazis on
September 23, 1942.

Brother: YECHIEL and SARAH HOCHBERG.
They survived the Holocaust and were taken
away from us so early in Life. Also all the
members of our big family.

Survivors:

Moshe Hochberg & Family, *Paris*
Sarah Hochberg Winegrad & Family, *Paris*
Chava Hochberg Kaufman & Family, *Paris*
Samuel Hochberg and Family, *Tel-Aviv, Israel*

In Loving Memory of
Holocaust victims
Parents
CHANINA and SURA YITA LEBENBAUM
Sisters
SHAINDLER, YANKEL and CHILDREN
FRAIDL, MEYER and CHILDREN
RAIZEL, DAVID and CHILDREN
PERL LEBENBAUM
Brothers
YOSSEL, BAISA and CHILDREN
MOSHE, CHANA ROZA and CHILDREN
Grandmother
ZLATA SHAINDLER GROOPSTEIN

Always Remembered — By
Dora Margolis *New York*
Benzion Lebenbaum *New York*
Gerson Lebenbaum *Australia*



In Loving Memory

My dear Parents

Mordechai and PERL BINSTOCK

Brother: YEHESKEL, BERISH, Yonah and Families

Sisters: HINDA, ELKE, ITE and Bashe and Families

From:

JANKEL, BINSTOCK, *Australia*



In Loving Memory.

My Parents BARUCH and SARH LEA GOLDMAN,
Brother SAMUEL CHAIM GOLDMAN and Family,
Brothers HARRY JACOB GOLDMAN and Family,
Sisters HELEN and RACHEL GOLDMAN,
ISRAEL DAVID SILBERBERG

From The Only Survivor
ALTA (GOLDMAN) GRAF



In Memory of my dearest,
perished in Treblinka in 1942.

My Parents NECHEMIA WOLF and
CEITL ROSENBLUM.

GRANDFATHER ISRAEL ROSENBLUM
BROTHERS, ELIEZER AND NATHAN
SISTERS HANNAH and HINDA

DOLEK ROSENBLUM and Family
JACOB ROSENBLUM and Family
RACHEL ROSENBLUM OKONSKI and Family



In loving memory
of my dear Wife,
Mother and Grandmother:
ROSE NATAN.

From:
Husband: JERY NATAN
Daughter: HELLEN
Son: EDDIE
Los Angeles, Calif.



In loving memory
of our dearest Parents:
EFRAIM and ESTHER GRINBAUM
Sisters: CHAVA-PERL and DEBORAH CYRIL
Brother: CHAIM-MEYER
Wife: SHEINDL GRINBAUM
and Children: CHANAH-FREIDL,
NATHAN-YITZCHOK, LEIBUSH YECHEZKIEL
and the whole Family.

Regina Urian Grinbaum and Family
Gity Zombek-Grinberg and Family
Toronto, Canada

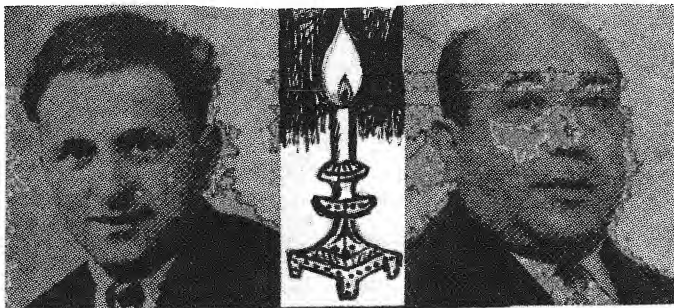


In loving memory
of our beloved
Husband, Father, and Grandfather
PHILIP KORNBROT.

From:
Genia Kornbrot
Children and Grandchildren
Miami, Florida



In loving memory of my dear
Husband, Father and Grandfather:
LEON GLAS
and his family
BERL and SARAH ROCHMA GLAS
Sisters: HANAH, LEAH, GOLDA, SHEINDEL
Brothers: WOLF SAUL DAVID, SHAYA.
Rachel Glas
Children: Bernard, Chayale & Families



We will never forget
our beloved husband and father
SAMUEL ROSENBAUM

From
SUZAN and RONALD ROSENBAUM
Paris

In loving memory of
my Husband
ISAIAH NUDELMAN
and his family
YITZHOK and
SARAH BEILA
and children

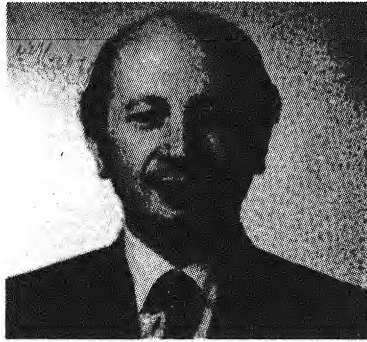
From
HANAH NUDELMAN
and children *Paris*

In Loving Memory
Aunt and Uncle
CHAIM and PESE LEAH BURSTINSKI
Cousins
YEHESKEL, BENJAMIN,
BERL BURSTINSKI; RIVKA NECHE
My Husband YAAKOV Died 24 Shevat 1974

NECHE KATZ,
SHLOMELE, SARAHLE
New York

In Memory of
My Parents
MENDL and ALTE-BROCHE PERL
Sisters
YOCHEVED, RACHEL LEAH,
ESTHER SHEVA, CIRL, MASHELE
Brother
ABRAHAM
And The Whole Family

From
Chana Perl Freilich



In loving memory of our beloved
Husband, Father and Grandfather:

JACK KURLENDER.

Born 12-10-1927, died 7-4-1983.

From:

Doris Kurlender and Family

Roslyn, New York



In Loving Memory of

My Beloved Husband

**BERNARD BECKER (BEKERMASZYN),
MORDECHAI, REBECA BEKERMASZYN,
SHEA, MINDL NUDELMAN,
BROTHERS OSHER, PHILLIP NUDELMAN
and family Tenenbaum**

HELLEN BECKER (NUDELMAN) and family

To the Eternal and Loving Memory
With sorrow, love and longing
we remember our Noble and Dear
Wife, Mother, and Grandmother
ROCHALE EISENBERG LIFSCHUTZ
She will live in our hearts and memory forever.

The LIFSCHUTZ FAMILY
New York



In Loving Memory

My Parents
FAYVL CYRL STARK (born Broniewsky)
Brother MEIR and MOSHE and Family
all perished in Treblinka

RACHEL STARK RUBINFELD
Brooklyn

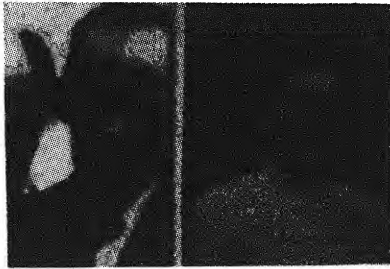


In loving memory of our dearest
Husband, Father and Brother:
JOSEPH SZTARK,
who lost his life in the anti-Nazi
resistance in France.

Bina Sztark, *Paris*
Emilia Perez, *Paris*
Mania Tenenbaum, *Paris*
Genia Kornbrot, *Florida*

In Memoriam
of My Dear Parents:
JONA and RACHEL MAJUVKA.
Sisters: REGINA and FAMILY,
CHELA and ESTHER
Brothers: ISAAC, SANA, NATHAN,
and Families
and 4 Families MAJUWKA, and
2 Families GOLDBERG and MODZIEWIECKI

The only survivors of the whole family
Baruch and Genia Majuwka (May), Israel



In loving memory of
my beloved Parents:

MOSHE YITZHOK and TOBI RACHEL BERGER,

Grandparents: BERISH and CHAYA BERGER.

Grandparents: YOSL and ESTHER AIZENBERG,

Aunties: REBECA, REITZE, SARAH,

LEAH BERGER, CHAVA WARSZAWSKI and
SARAH WOLNOWICZ

Uncles: NUTA FISHEL, MOSHE and
NOACH AIZENBERG

*From: Nehama Maybruch Berger, and Family
Brooklyn*

In Loving Memory
of my Mother:

HELEN ROSENBERG (GUTTMAN)

Passed away in February 1984.

Her Son:

MICHAEL (MAJOREK) ROSENBERG

Toronto, Canada



In Loving Memory of my Dear Husband
Aaron Nucher

From
Eva Nucher, *Florida*



In Memory of
our Wife and Mother **BELLA ZUKER-CIMBER**
her Father **SHLOMA**
her Mother **FRADEL**
Brothers, Sisters and Families

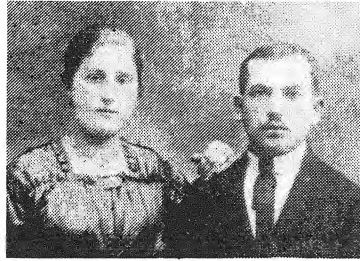
From
CARL CIMBER, Son and daughter

In memory of my dear Friend:
FEIGA-TOBI MORA (NUDELMAN)
Who helped me in the Nazi Holocaust.
She was murdered
with her little daughter, DIANA
September 23, 1942
They will never be forgotten.

From
Rachel Kapyt, *Brooklyn, NY*

In memory of my beloved Parents:
MICHAEL and CHAYA SHWARTZ
Sisters: FREDA, RAYZL, RIVKA,
DEBORAH-PERL SHWARTZ
Brothers: MOTL, SIMON SHWARTZ

The only survivor
Luba Keller Schwartz, *Brooklyn, NY*



In loving memory
of our beloved Parents:
SIMON and HINDA SHWARCFING
Brothers: YONA YECHIEL, LEON, ABRAHAM
Sisters: FRIDA, ZLATE.

Florence Tabrys-Shwarcfing
Leah Brand-Shwarcfing

I will never forget my beloved family.
My Parents: ISAHIAH HESHL and FEIGA ERLICH
Sisters: HANTSHE and RACHELA ERLICH
Grandparents: MOTL (SHOCHET) and
CHAVA ERLICHMAN
Uncles: ISHAIAH, RAFAEL, MOSHE, FISHEL
Aunties: SARAH and PERL and their families.

The only survivor:
Rivkele Erlichman (Turek)
Little Neck, New York



In loving memory
of my Husband:
JACK KOSIEROWSKI
His parents and the whole family
From
Ida Kosierowski and Daughters
Brooklyn, N.Y.

In Memoriam of
my dearest Parents:
ITSHE, FREIDA ZALCTREGER
Brother: DAVID and SARAH and CHILDREN
Brother: HERSHEL and RIVKA-LEAH & CHILDREN
Brother: YANKEL and FAMILY,
Brother: ZALMAN
Sister: CHAYA-ESTER,
Husband: YANKL BEKERMASZYN

From: Roshia Kwal (Zalctreger)
Miami Beach, Florida



In Memory of
my beloved Parents:
AARON and MANIA CINGER
and Brother: SAM CINGER

From:
Barbara Roth (Cinger) and Family
Vineland, N.J.

In loving memory

of my dearest Parents:
CHAIM-JACOB and SARAH MALKA WAKSBERG
Brothers: ISRAEL, HERSHL, MOSHE
Sisters: BRONIA, HELLEN and Family.

From:
Hanka Krakowski (Waksberg)
Miami Beach, Florida



In loving memory of our dear
Husband, Father and Grandfather:
JOE MANDEL
We will honor his memory forever.

From:
Devoted Wife: MASHA MANDEL
Son: HARRY and Family
Daughter: CAROL and Husband

In loving memory of our dear
Father, Husband and Grandfather:
RACHMIL COOPERSMITH
and his Parents:
YECHIEL MOSHE and RIVA LEAH.



Survived by his Wife: EVA,
2 Daughters: Ruth Kerbel and
Linda Schwartz and 5 Grandchildren.

Eva Coopersmith
Toronto

In Loving Memory
Parents
HERSH LEIB and FRUMET ROSENBLAT
Brothers
MEIR, ABRAHM, MOSHE BARUCH,
FISHEL, and MICHAEL
Sister-in-Law
LEAH RICHTER, SHEINDL SHADMAN
and Brother-in-Law
YANKL RICHTER

FAIGELE ROSENBLAT-GINDMAN
New Jersey

In memory of
my dear and beloved Parents:
ELIMELLECH and MILKA, *Paris*
Grandparents: MORDECHAI MENDEL
and HANAH LEAH, *Paris*
Brother: ABRAHAM JACOB, *Paris*
Uncle: MOSHE SHACHNA and BLUMA
Son: ELIE
Uncle: SIMON AND YITA BELA and
Children: HAYA, DEBORAH, MATHEL
and ABRAHAM BINEM
Uncle: HERSHEL and EVA and Child
Auntie: Perl and Family

The only survivor
HELLEN KORNBROT-PARIS, *Flushing, N.Y.*



In Memoriam of my family who perished in the Nazi
Holocaust al kidush-Hashem in 1942 in Treblinka.

Parents: BINEM and LEAH TOITER

Brothers: ABRAHAM, NATHAN, BEREL, CHAIM

From

Rachela and Nathan Friedman (Toiter)

Los Angeles

In Memory of

my Father

SAMUEL KIRSHENBLAT

Mother SARAH

Sister CHANA

Brothers ISRAEL and CHAIM

ESTHER KIRSHENBLATT

Canada



In memory of my dear and beloved family
Parents: JOSEF-BARUCH & LEAH ZILBERSTEIN
Brothers: HIRSH-MENDL & MORDECHAI ZILBERSTEIN
Sisters: REBECCA & MACHALA ZILBERSTEIN

The only survivor
Gilbert-Zilberstein and Family
Los Angeles, California

In loving memory of my beloved Parents:
LAYBUSH-DAVID and CHANCIA FUKS (LEWKOWITZ)
Brothers: WOLF, and YANKEL FUKS
Sister: CHAYA FUKS and Relatives
Uncle: SHLOME
Auntie: CHAYA LUBA LEWKOWITZ and 5 Sons.
They were killed by the Nazi murderers
at Kidush Hashem in Treblinka.
They will never be forgotten.

The only survivor
Lola Mazliach (FUKS) and Family,
Calumet City, Illinois, U.S.A



In loving memory
of my beloved
Husband, Father and Grandfather:
YERUCHEM WEIMAN
He will never be forgotten.

Zelde Weiman, Children and Grandchildren
Veinland, N.J.



In memory of
HARRY ROTMAN,
beloved Husband, Father and Grandfather.

Esther Rotman, Children and Grandchildren
Zelda (Weichandler)
Florida



In Memory of
My dear Parents
BERNARD and ROSALIA SZAPSZEWIZ,
My dear Brothers SHLOMO, ABRAM and SHYMON
who were all murdered by the Nazis.
JACOB and MARIA SZAPSZEWIZ,
Daughters ROSE and JOANNE.

In loving memory
of my dear Family
Parents: RAFAEL and CHANA-SARAH BROTMAN
Brothers: CHAIM-SAMUEL
Sisters: ESTHER-RIVKA and RACHEL
Uncle: MORDECHAI-HIRSH & CHANA WARSHAU,
SON: GEDALIA. ABRAHAM & SARAH BLICHER.
SON: ISRAEL.
Their daughter: GITL and ANSHEL LAKS
Auntie: HINDA FRIDLEWSKI

From
Nathan Brotman and Family
New York



To the Eternal Memory
of our beloved
Husband, Father and Grandfather
MENACHEM ROSENEWEIG
and Father Grandfather
ARI LEIB CHESNER

From
HANAH ROSENEWEIG and Family
Brooklyn, New York

Forever in our memory
our Parents:
SHMULEK and RUCHEL ZLOTOWITZ
Brothers: KIVA and VELVEL
Sister: ESTHER GITTELE
with her Husband ABRAHAM DUBROTZKY
and their Son: CHAIM
Sisters: BROCHA, GITTELE and
SHINDEL ZLOTOWITZ

Saul Slotow and Family
Shlomo Zlotowitz and Family
Sarah Zlotowitz Rekas and Family
Los Angeles
Leibisch Zlotowitz
Israel



In Memoriam of our
Precious Parents:
ESTHER and JACK LEIBOWITZ
and loving Brother: PHILIP LEIBOWITZ
May their love shine on us always.
Jean-Jack Pomeranz (Nee Leibowitz)
Samuel (Mollie) Leibowitz

I Will Never Forget
My Dear Parents
HERSHL and MIRIAM WESTER
Brother
VELVL CHAIM
Sister
CHANA ESTHER,
RACHEL LEAH WESTER
CHAYAH HOLZER-WESTER
New Jersey

In Loving Memory
of my beloved parents
HERSHL and ESTHER EISENBERG

Sister: ROSA

Husband: HERSHL KOHEN

Children: SALY, ALTA, YOSL

Sister: GUTSHA

Husband: GEDALIA RADECKI

Children: YOSL, SARAH, and ROSA

Sister: CHAYA

Husband: BINEM SHWARZFUTER

Son: BARUCH

Sister: MANIA EISENBERG

and sisters: CHAVAH, RIVKAH, and FRANIA

The last 3 sister survived the Holocaust
and were taken away so early in Life.

They will be remembered forever.

From

FAITSHA BENCKI-EISENBERG and FAMILY

Melbourne, Australia

Dedicated in Loving Memory of our Dearest
Parents: MENDL and MALA KUPERMAN
Dear Sisters: BAYLA-CHAVA and DEBORAH
and Brother: JACOB KUPERMAN

From

SARAH KUPERMAN-WASSER,

RACHEL LUBOCKI

Los Angeles, California



In Eternal Memory of
our Daughter: ANNE PERL, age 25
and Son-In Law: HENRY FREEDMAN, age 29
Who died tragically in a car accident

From
Their Parents, SAM and RUSHKA STIGLIC
and Family, WESTER

Dedicated in Loving Memory of our
Parents: LEIBL and CHAYA KEMELHAR
BERL and GOLDA OSTROWIECKI
Our Brothers and Sisters and their Families

Devoted:
SIMSON and BROCHA OSTROWIECKI KEMELHAR
Minneapolis, Minnesota

בני עירנו שידלובצה
 שמסרו נפשם על קיום
 עם ישראל ומדינת ישראל
 ה' ינקום דמם.



Fallen Shidlvtser in
 The Independence War
 of Israel in 1948

